

OUR FEATHERED FAMILIES!
GAME



WATERBIRDS

BY

H. G. ADAMS.



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HARVARD UNIVERSITY



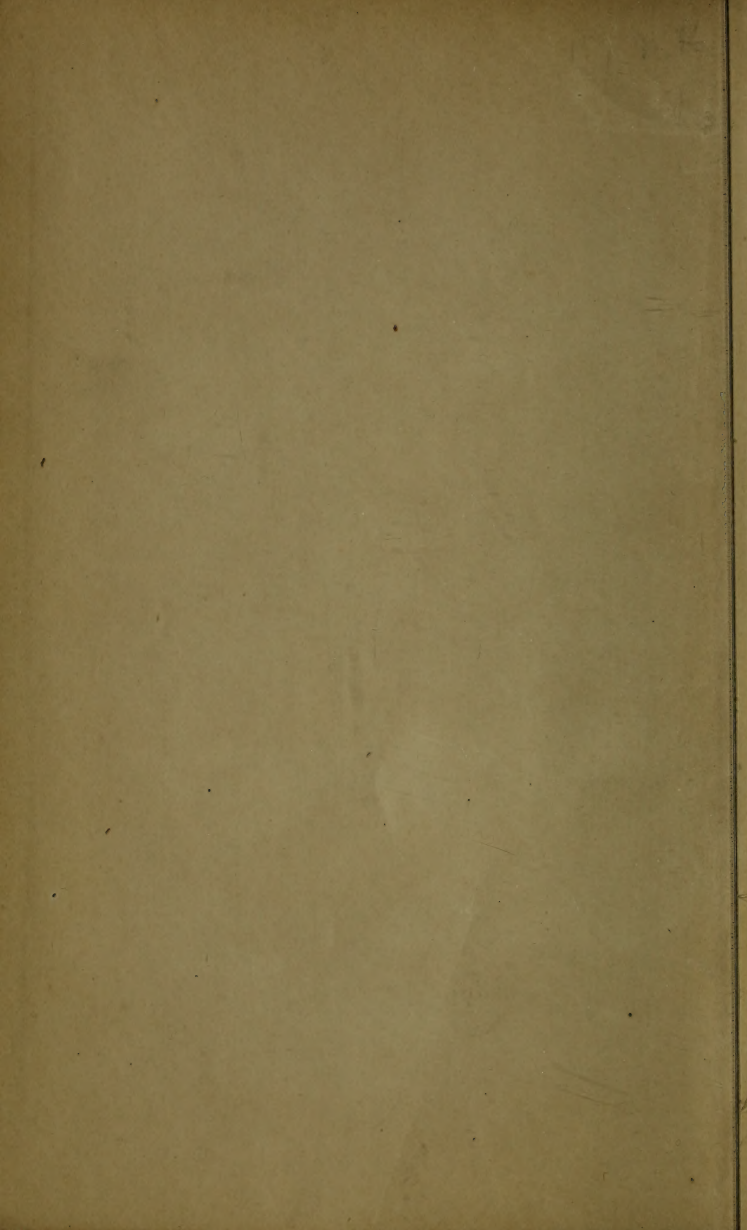
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FEEDING THE WATER-FOWL.

OUR FEATHERED FAMILIES:

GAME AND WATER BIRDS.

BEING

An Anecdotal and Descriptive Account

OF

THE FEATHERED GAME AND WILD FOWL,

WITH THEIR ALLIED SPECIES, FOUND IN GREAT BRITAIN.

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A PRACTICAL CHAPTER ON DOVES AND PIGEONS.

BY H. G. ADAMS,

Author of 'Birds of Song,' 'Birds of Prey,' 'The Young Naturalist's Library,' &c.

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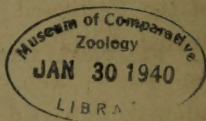
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PREFACE.

WE here bring to a conclusion our pleasant task of presenting to the public a complete account of the Feathered Inhabitants of, or visitors to, the British Islands. Not a species, however rare, has, we believe, been omitted; and, as far as our space allowed, we have described their peculiarities of form and colour of plumage, their habits and their haunts. Of British birds there are, according to Macgillivray, 320 species: 143 being permanent residents; 44 summer birds, which breed with us; 36 winter residents; and 97 stragglers from various quarters; and of these more than half are called Aquatic Birds.

A difficulty has been experienced in effecting a division of these into three distinct groups, which our plan of publication required, and to give to each volume a title which should express the general character of the birds included therein.

‘Birds of Song,’ ‘Birds of Prey,’ and ‘Game and Water Birds,’ were the titles fixed on for our three volumes, as best expressing the nature of their contents. In the last of these it has been necessary to include a far greater number of species than are contained in either of the other volumes. But, on the whole, we venture to hope that we have produced a work on British Birds suitable for popular reading, containing as much information as the space permitted, and that of a kind not calculated to mislead.

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GAME BIRDS AND WATER FOWL.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT ARE GAME BIRDS?

WE have here a wide subject to discuss; one that will take us far away from the fireside and the study, to wander where the prickly furze puts forth its golden blossoms, and the blue campanula swings its delicate bells in the fresh autumnal gale. On the wide wild moorland, and the heathery hillside; through ferny woodland, and through thorny brake; by loch and glen, and brawling mountain stream; by placid lake, and along the shore, where the rude waves dash and break, and scatter their spray far up the beetling cliffs, tenanted by innumerable wild fowl, that fill the upper air with shrill and piercing cries, responsive to the clang and boom of the boisterous waves below. A scene like that described by Charlotte Smith at Beachy Head, whose base is lashed by the ever-restless ocean:—

Where inmates of the chalky cliffs, that soar
The sides precipitous, with shrill harsh cry,
Their white wings glancing in the level beams,
The terns, and gulls, and tarrocks, seek their food,
And the rough hollows echo to the voice
Of the grey choughs and ever-restless daws,
With clamours not unlike the chiding hounds.

Such are the scenes that we have, in fancy at least, to look upon; and such are the sounds that must for awhile fill our

ears ; not always, however, wild and dark and turbulent ; not always harsh and discordant. Sometimes we shall press the velvet sward of the noble park, where the feathery fern waves free, and old ancestral trees cast shadows broad and deep far into the sea of golden sunshine ; there the stillness will be only broken by the soft coo of the dove, the chatter of the jay, or the sudden whirr of the pheasant's wings, as it rises from the neighbouring thicket, and flies across the glade, in all the glittering splendour of its gold and russet plumes. Sometimes we shall linger by the flowery dingle, or the hedgerow bank, and see the speckled partridge lead her young brood forth into the clover-patch or corn-field, to hunt amid the green stalks for beetles and wire-worms, grubs, maggots, and other such dainty morsels. Sometimes amid the stillness and solitude of its mountain home, we shall mark the Blackcock spread its glossy wings, or the Red Grouse bask amid the heather, as yet unscared by dog and gun ; or, (rare sight !) perchance, catch a glimpse of that monarch of game birds, the Capercailzie, in his now almost deserted home, amid the pine woods of Scotland, and,

Yon wild mossy mountains sae lofty and wide,
That nurse in their bosom the youth o' the Clyde,
Where the Grouse lead their coveys through the heather to feed,
And the shepherd tents his flock as he pipes on his reed.

It behoves us here to enquire what is meant by the term 'Game.' It appears to come from an Icelandic root, *gaman*, a jest or sport, and, as applied to living creatures, signifies, according to Johnson, 'animals pursued in the field, or appropriated to legal sportsmen.' When the ancients speak of 'Game,' they most commonly allude, not to the timid and retiring Pheasant or Woodcock, Quail or Partridge, or other creatures which invariably seek safety in flight ; but to the fierce and powerful denizens of the forest and the desert, such as the tawny lion, the gaunt wolf, the tiger, and the bear. The sportsmen of old were 'mighty hunters before the Lord,' true descendants of Nimrod ; and such are they in many countries to this day, 'bagging,' like Gordon Cumming, their hippopotami and elephants, and other such 'small deer.' There is something manly,

too, in this kind of 'sport;' and in the destruction of the more fierce and rapacious animals, a great service is rendered to man. But it irks us much to read of the indiscriminate slaughter of meek and harmless creatures, that might be domesticated and rendered useful, or that, at least, were not injurious, and therefore might be allowed to roam their native wilds in unmolested enjoyment of the life which their Creator gave them. If their flesh, or their skins, or other portions of their frames, are required for the sustenance or clothing of man, or any other purpose of utility, slay them by all means; they were given for our use; but do not make 'sport' of their agony; do not unnecessarily wound or destroy them. This is cruelty, which is contrary alike to the word of Divine revelation, and the natural feelings of the enlightened human heart. Against this we would lift up our voice, whether it is exercised in the wilds of Africa, or in the game preserves of England, whose crowded denizens are sometimes surrounded by a circle of flaming tubes, which shower death and destruction among them, until they fall by hundreds and thousands, bleeding and mutilated by the hands of sportsmen, (?) who are too idle or too effeminate even to secure their game, or load or carry their guns, these offices being performed by liveried menials. And this is 'sport!' Say rather Butchery! for by this name only can we designate the 'battue,' such as Mr. Knox tells us took place on a well-known manor of Norfolk some years since, when upwards of two thousand head of game were killed in the course of four days' shooting. Bah! The Oakleigh Shooting Code says, that 'it is the rarity and difficulty of attainment of a bird that renders the acquisition of it desirable to the true sportsman.' Therefore such idle and wholesale slaughterers stand condemned by their own recognised laws; clearly, *they* are not true sportsmen.

Surely the manor above-mentioned must have been like the estate advertised for sale, in which there were 600 acres of cover, where the 'pheasants, partridges, hares, fowl, snipes, and woodcocks literally *blacken the air.*' This would be a perfect paradise for a cockney sportsman, who could hardly fire with his eyes shut without hitting something; such, for instance, as Jonathan Duggins, from whose

diary, as given by Thomas Hood, we make an extract: 'Heard some Pheasants crowing by the side of a plantation; got within gunshot of two of the birds, vich Higgins said they vos two gamecocks; but Hicks, who had often been to Vestminster pit, said no sitch thing, as gamecocks had square tails, and smooth necks, and long military spurs. Shot at 'em as Pheasants, and believe ve killed 'em both; but hearing some 'orrid screams come out of the plantation immediately hafter, we all took to our 'eels and ran away, vithout stopping to pick either of 'em up. At the end of a mile came suddenly upon a strange sort of bird, vich Hicks declared to be a cock-o'-the-woods: sneaked behind him, and killed him — turned out to be a peacock.'

Many are the amateur 'sportsmen,' like our astute friend Duggins, who, duly as the season cometh, clean up their rusty pieces, such as Joe Manton or Colonel Hawker would shudder to look upon, and, without troubling themselves about a game certificate, sally forth to shoot at all feathered creatures that be; scarcely knowing a hawk from a handsaw, or how to hit a barn or a wheat stack, they blaze away, and do a deal of positive mischief, besides scaring the game, and rendering the cover unprofitable to the real sportsman. But this is a subject on which we need not dwell, neither need we treat upon the delicate question of game preserving, which leads to so many fatal affrays with poachers, those children of the night, whose song is said to be —

Merry it is, on a moonlight night,
 When the squire is snug a-bed,
 To shoulder the rusty fowling-piece,
 And the bludgeon armed with lead.
 Then over the old park pale to leap,
 And hid in the leafy shade,
 Up to the home preserve to creep—
 Oh! ours is a roaring trade.

But we have wandered from the question, 'What is Game?' What are the animals included under this general term, and which have been the subject of legislation in this country, from the Norman conquest to the present time? Strictly speaking, the term 'Game' only includes Hares,

Pheasants, Partridges, Grouse, Moor Game, Black Game, and Bustards. Snipes, Quails, Landrails, Woodcocks, and Conies, although not exactly Game, are yet to a certain degree protected as such; no uncertificated person may kill or take them. The proprietor of an enclosed piece of ground, his tenant or servant, may take Woodcocks, Snipes, and Rabbits, in nets or snares.

Let us now, in such 'Hiawatha' metre as we can command, give our readers an introductory picture of the principal Game Birds in their homes and haunts.

In the north the Capercailzie
 Dwells amid the dark pine forests,
 And his husky crow at morning
 Wakes the echoes of the mountain,
 Down whose side, with foam and sparkle,
 Leaps the streamlet, over-shadowed
 By the drooping lady-birches:
 There his bold bright eye outflashes,
 Like a gem in scarlet setting;
 There his purple plumes resplendent
 Catch the sunshine, as he walketh
 Proudly in his own dominions—
 He the monarch among game birds!

On the purple heath-clad moorland,
 Where the grey cairn standeth lonely,
 And the ruined watch-tower telleth
 Of the border strife and foray;
 There the Blackcock's glossy plumage
 Shines amid the stunted bushes,
 Juniper, and ling, and grasses,
 Waving golden in the sunshine;
 There his hoarse crow breaks the silence,
 To the crouching Grey Hen calling.

All amid the broom sae bonnie,
 Where the silver gowans twinkle,
 Where the river to the lowlands
 Floweth on, as though rejoicing
 Sterile heights to leave, and wander
 Through the fruitful plains and valleys;
 There the Red Grouse—Scottish Muirfowl—
 In his dress of brown, embroidered
 O'er with purple, gold, and crimson,
 Feeds on heather tops, and berries,

Flying oft from ridge to hollow,
With his mates on sounding pinions—
Welcome sounds to eager sportsmen!

Meantime where the mountain summits,
Covered o'er with snowy mantles,
Pierce the sky, and spots of verdure,
Few and far between, seem islands
In a sea of rolling billows,
Dashing up their mingling foam-crests.
There the Ptarmigan—the White Grouse —
Like in kind unto the Moorfowl,
Dwells in solitudes sublimest;
Lonely dwells, where seldom cometh
Foot of man; where seldom echo
Wakes to hear the mimic thunder
Of the death-devoting barrel,
'Mid the peaks reverberating,
'Mid the glens and rocky hollows.

All among the leafy woodlands,
When the trees have donned their richest
Garniture, and fruitful autumn
Maketh all things ripe and golden—
Maketh all things rich and mellow;
There the Pheasant, with a splendid
Dress, befitting such a season,
Glides through ferny brakes and thickets,
Crouches in the dells and dingles,
'Mid the purple bells of foxgloves,
'Mid the grasses tall and feathery;
Hiding from keen-scented pointers—
Foolish bird, all vainly hiding!

Earlier yet, the whirring covey,
Startled from the juicy clover,
Or the cornfield, where the poppies
Stain the golden ear with scarlet;
Or the hedge bank, or the coppice—
Scattered down the wind go flying;
Some to seek more distant covers;
Some to sink, with mottled plumage
Specked with sanguine stains, and ruffled,
Soon within the laden game-bag
To be borne away in triumph,
Earliest of the sportsman's trophies!



PHEASANT.

CHAPTER II.

PHEASANTS : — THE COMMON, GOLD AND SILVER — IMPEYAN,
AND REEVES' PHEASANTS.

Bird of resplendant plumes! that lov'st to take
Thy pleasure in the brown October woods,
Amid the feathery fern, and tangled brake;
Shy haunter of the sylvan solitudes,
Where seldom foot of wayfarer intrudes;
That with thy sober-suited mate dost dwell
In alleys green, where silence ever broods,
Till startled by the sharp report — thy knell!
Bright Asian bird, who brought thee hither, say,
From where the Phasis laves its yellow sands?
Was 't he who bore the golden fleece away,
And led the Argonauts to distant lands?
No golden fleece more bright than thou, I ween,
Lighting the sombre woods with iridescent sheen.

THE *Phasianidæ* is a family of birds belonging to the order *Gallinæ*, that is, galinaceous birds, sometimes called *Rasores*, or Scrapers. They are mostly of large size and great beauty of plumage, and are much sought after as food, being often domesticated for that purpose. The Peacocks, Turkeys, and various breeds of domestic fowls known to us, all belong to this order, of which the Pheasant genus (*Phasianus*) is the type; and the typical species, the com-

mon Pheasant. In a wild state, all the birds of the above order reside in woods and thickets, seeking their food chiefly in the ground, and nestling among the herbage. They feed on insects of various kinds, and vegetable substances in general, with occasionally leaves and insects. Their digestive apparatus is peculiar, the gizzard performing the work of a mill for grinding and tritulating the food before it passes into the stomach.

Truly a glorious bird is the *Phasianus Colchicus* — the Common Pheasant of the English preserve! And what so exciting to the sportsman as the *whir-r-r-r* of its quickly-expanded wings, as it rises heavily from the covert, and vainly seeks in flight that safety which the fern brake and leafy copse will no longer afford? There has it dwelt, since first it chipped the shell, and came forth from the clear brown egg, a little downy creature, scarcely bigger than a sparrow, to follow its heedful mother hither and thither, and be fed with such ‘delicacies of the season’ as ants’ eggs, small caterpillars, grubs, and maggots, which she scratched out of the earth, or from amid the dead leaves, or picked out from the crevices of the old park palings or the decayed trunks of trees. The nest of the parent bird had been commenced when the bleak March winds were whistling through the nearly-naked boughs, and the January snows yet lay in white patches between the spreading roots of the gnarled oaks, and towering elms, and in many a nook and hollow of the wide woodland. When the primrose buds were just beginning to show themselves, and a faint odour, like a promise and a foretaste of delicious things to come, was wafted from the mossy violet beds; when all nature stood listening for the first shout of the cuckoo, to tell that spring was really come; when now and then a solitary songster sent forth an interrupted strain, in preparation for the vernal chorus, and the ear heard, or the heart fancied, a sound of innumerable wings of nightingales, and other melodious migrants, returning to their old haunts and homes of happiness, winnowing the boisterous air, and soothing it into mildness and serenity, as music is said by Milton to have smoothed—

The raven down of darkness till it smiled;

then it was that the short husky crow of the cock Pheasant was heard in the woods, telling of love and rivalry; then the little brown hen fluttered and plumed her sober-coloured wings, and began to bestir herself, and prepare for the maternal duties which she knew must ere long devolve upon her, and her alone; for her liege lord, to whose presence she was now invited, will take no share in them. Let us not despise the little brown hen—‘Let us not,’ as Jesse has it, ‘when we see the male expanding his rich and varied plumage in the sunbeams, forget that on the female devolve all the offices of love and affection. She hatches, feeds, and protects at the risk of her life her helpless young ones; and what we may consider as lowering her in the scale of creation is, on the contrary, an act of the greatest kindness and consideration. Her want of beauty is her chief protection, and her humility saves her from a thousand perils.’ As humility ever will do, let us add; ‘To be secure be humble,’ sings the poet.

When the snows had altogether disappeared, and the perfume of the April violets came full and fresh upon the now gentle gales, and the fully-expanded primroses mingled their faint odour therewith, and the delicate wind-flowers were gathered in clusters by the eager city dwellers in every hazel shaw and coppice; when the cuckoo had shouted, and the nightingale had sung out the joyful tidings of spring’s advent; then, just as ‘the flowery-kirtled May’ was approaching to make the earth yet more bright, and verdurous, and altogether beautiful, might be seen beneath the woodland bank, or the tangled grass which clothes the hollow dell, or hard by, among the green sprouting clover, the slightly-made nest of the hen-Pheasant, with its ten or twelve eggs of a uniform olive colour.

When the song-birds had poured out their spring melody in the shady woodlands, and the sunshine interlaced with golden threads the leafy canopy above, and made zigzags and broad paths of light on the velvet sward beneath; when the fresh winds had fanned themselves to sleep, overcome by the heavy load of perfume which went floating upon the warm breath of ‘the lusty mower, June,’ whose merry ‘rink-a-tink’ was heard around every farmstead,

where the swathes lay long and regular like waves in a sea of verdure rolling eastward to meet the sun, and becoming each moment more and more golden-tinged with its beams; when the buzz and murmur of insect voices, and the flitting of gaily-coloured wings, announced the coming of summer, whose floral attendants scattered nectar and ambrosia in such profusion around her way, that the sense was oppressed with the fullness of delight, and the soul went floating away upon a sea of extacy—then it was that the little brood came forth, and went rolling about like balls of yellow down, after their clucking and exulting dam, who led them through

Many a lane, and many an alley green,
Dingle, and bushy dell of the wild wood,
And many a bosky bourn from side to side.

There they go, little round rollicking things, chittering and twittering all day long, carefully fed and watched and attended by their assiduous mother, who covers them with her wings at night, and defends them as best she can against the damps and dews, and often less successfully against furred and feathered enemies, the weasel, the polecat, and the skulking fox, the night-hawk, and the ghost-like owl, which in lieu of a mouse supper will, if he has a chance, take a plump little pheasant or partridge, or any other small game of the kind.

The watchful keeper marks the brood, secures the hen and chicks by night, and bears them for greater security to the home preserve, should the place of their birth be an outlying spot, exposed to many dangers; or it may be that he has noted the slight hollow, scratched by the hen bird, and lined with dead leaves, and removed the eggs and her to a place of security before the hatching of the poults. Should they, however, have escaped his notice, the chances are that few of them will live to attain maturity. When the summer was far advanced, and the emerald and sapphire dragon-flies were gleaming amid the velvet heads of the waving bulrushes; when the corn was turning yellow upon the upland leas, and the fresh green hues of the woodlands were gradually changing into the russet tints of

autumn;—then the young Pheasants of both sexes had assumed the plumage of greyish yellow, variegated with brown and black, which closely resembles that of the mother-bird, and which they retain until the first moult as the distinctive mark of chickenhood.

Then what a happy life was theirs!—feasting and frolicking all day long ‘in the pleasant shade of the leafy glade,’ or in the golden sunshine of the open corn-field; by the rushy pool which the heron haunts; or in the sandy hollow where the rabbit burrows; gliding through the fern brakes, and threading the mazes of the tangled thicket, and resting awhile by the hedge-row bank, screened from view by the tall flowering grasses, or trying their young wings in the fir plantations, or from clump to clump of the stately trees which stud like islets the level sward of the park or paddock, where the dappled deer are browsing on the short sweet herbage.

Still does the hen-bird share in their pleasures and sports, and direct them to those spots where food is most plentiful and easily procured—worms and various insects, the tender shoots of many plants, bulbous and other roots, &c.; and as the autumn advances, and their strength matures, so that they are able to take and digest stronger food, they obtain a plentiful supply of grain, acorns, beech-nuts, and the wild fruits of the hedges and thickets; and when these fail, they have but to resort to the home enclosure, and they will find that man has not been unmindful of their care and sustenance. But ere that period arrives they will often have been alarmed and scattered by the report of the deadly gun, the sound of the human voice, and the stealthy tread of the well-trained pointer, all telling that the season of destruction has arrived, if not for them, whose want of age will in most cases prove an exception, yet for many of their friends and relatives, perhaps for that tender parent who has watched over them so carefully and long.

In the meantime, what has become of the cock-Pheasant, the great object of pursuit and admiration in the glorious month of October, and far into the winter? As soon as the season of reproduction was over, he left the female bird

to perform her maternal duties alone, and betook himself, in all the freedom of bachelorhood, to roaming wherever his fancy pleased. Up and down through the green alleys and leafy avenues he flew and strutted; he crouched awhile amid the fern stalks under the spreading fronds, and stooped to bathe in and drink of the brook which lapsed away, with gurgle like a lullaby, beneath the shadow of the stunted thorns and alders just without the wood, deep within whose bosom was

The mossy fount which no sun sees,
Girdled in by leafy trees,

that supplied the crystal current of its peaceful existence. He scorned alike the company of the chattering jay and the cooing dove, and rested not by the tall elms where the rooks held noisy council, because he loved quiet and solitude, rarely associating even with his own kinsfolk. In spots seldom disturbed by a passing footstep might he be seen, basking in the sunshine, with his gorgeous plumes outspread; the whirr of his wings breaks the silence, ever and anon; but seldom except at pairing time do you hear his husky crow; then, indeed, as William Howitt says, when

The jay's red breast
Peeps over its nest,
In the midst of the crab blossoms blushing,
And the call of the pheasant
Is frequent and pleasant,
When all other calls are hushing—

Then he becomes a bold, noisy, quarrelsome fellow; no longer shy and retiring, but confident and obtrusive, he struts and crows in the open glade, sending forth his love calls and invitations, and defying any rival who might be inclined to intrude within the space of which he has for the time constituted himself lord and master. But the proud look and bearing, which seem to say, 'I am monarch of all I survey!' is soon changed for the skulking and timorous aspect, and the hidling, cautious habits which generally characterize the bird. Yet for all that, as we said before, what a glorious bird it is! and how well the rich tints of its plumage harmonize with those of the autumnal woodlands! And this reminds us of a beautiful

picture of Pheasant life at this season, given by Thomas Miller, in his 'Beauties of the Country,' which we think our readers will like to look upon again, even though it should be familiar to them.

'What a lordly creature a Pheasant looks, moving along the grassy glade of a wood, now erecting his head as if to listen, while perchance a sunbeam falls upon his burnished neck, then stooping to pick up a fallen acorn, the long plumes of his tail swaying in the wind like silken pennons, or, alarmed by the rustling of the long reeds, plunging among the underwood, or flapping his way to the ivied arm of a tree! How beautiful appears a flock of these birds, feeding upon the wild wood-fruits in some sequestered path, which is seldom trodden by any foot saving their own! What terrible havoc the murderous gun makes of their splendid feathers, scattering their gold and crimson and purple plumes upon the wind, and drawing down the bright scarlet rim that encircles the deep shining eyes which the filmy darkness covers! The sound of their voices, too, calling to each other from the distant thickets, harmonises well with the silence of the scene. Then to come upon them unawares when they are squatting among the tangled grass and plants, and see them spring up, and, with a loud noise, *whirr* through the woven branches to some more secret covert, is a beautiful and striking sight, especially in the month of October, when every motion of their strong wings scatters a shower of golden leaves to the ground.'

Will our readers bear with us, if we endeavour to extend this piece of nature-painting, so as to include a few more incidents of Pheasant life, whose greatest perils commence in the season here described? When the golden-haired September has whistled out his merry tune over the hill-tops, and the broad round hunter's moon has shone full upon the cleared stubble field, and the hedges festooned with the feathery clematis; when the barns and rick-yards are full, and the squirrel and dormouse are beginning to store acorns and hazel nuts for the coming winter, then

See, from the brake the whirring pheasant springs,
And mounts exulting on triumphant wings.

But far better for him had he remained hidden in the leafy covert, for

Short is his joy ; he feels the fiery wound,
Flutters in blood, and panting beats the ground.
Ah, what avails his glossy varying dyes,
His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,
His vivid green, his shining plumes unfold,
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold ?

In vain will the frightened bird now attempt to escape ; enemies are on every side of him ; and, crouch as close as he may, they will discover his hiding place ; the keen-scented pointer will indicate his whereabouts. Now he lurks deep in the tangled underwood, and deems himself secure from all his foes, while far and wide through the woodlands on every side of them the frequent *bang—bang* gives fearful note of the work of destruction. Faint and more faint these sounds of danger now become, until at length they cease altogether, or are only heard in the far distance ; while close around all is silence, broken only by the caw of the fieldward-flying rook, the croak of the raven upon the naked branch of the lightning-stricken tree, or the soft *coo-coo* of the dove. The squirrel descends the rugged bole to gambol awhile in the ferny knolls, amid the twisted roots of the giant oaks ; and up from its home in the warren comes the grey rabbit, and sits cleaning its furry face in the sunshine, which finds its way through the leafy canopy above. All at once, however, it utters a sharp cry, and darts off, for from the thicket creeps forth a red-eyed weasel, and the bark of a skulking fox breaks unpleasantly upon the ear. Up from his ground covert springs the Pheasant, and seeks safety amid the branches of the elm, where he crouches close, sending out wary glances on every side from the loopholes of his retreat. Again is heard a shot ; and then, closer still, a cheer, and a shrill whistle—a fluttering of wings, a dashing, rustling sound ; a wounded bird, as swiftly as its drooping wing will allow, runs across the glade, followed closely by a spotted retriever, which seizes and bears it away in its mouth. Footsteps approach ; a pause, a cold sharp click ; the eager

snuffing of a dog, and now the steady pointer stands in view, fixed and rigid as though turned to stone, and

The pheasant startles from the brake,
With all his gaudy plumes outspread;
The sportsman, surer aim to take,
Crouches mid fern and bracken red,
Or steals along from brush to tree,
Silent, and slow, and cautiously.

Again the death-shot rings through the wood, and the shooter passes on, rejoicing in the acquisition of a second year's cock, a noble fellow, whose weight cannot be much short of four pounds, with a tail like an embroidered pennon.

Craven says that 'for pheasant-shooting, if you use dogs at all, employ low-backed spaniels with short legs: never take your setters with them; for you cannot find a dog, any more than a man, master of all trades. These spaniels,' says our authority, 'ought to be slow, mute, and fond of "pottering," or hunting close about you; but' (and this, be it remarked, is a very important but) 'the true way to go about this business is to take cover yourself, with only a single steady retriever at your heels, some thirty or forty yards behind you a couple of boys with sticks, to beat the bushes, and who will instantly give over when they hear a shot, until the word is again given by you—"go on;" they should then proceed as before.' Furthermore, he says that 'in beating for pheasants, more particularly early in the season, don't leave a foot of cover untried; we have often found a whole nidus in a tuft you might put under your pocket handkerchief, and that, too, within a few yards of a spot where a volley of jokes had been firing off for half-an-hour.'

With this habit of the bird of lying close, all sportsmen are well acquainted; it renders a careful searching or beating of the covers necessary to its successful pursuit. Old birds, especially, when disturbed in their usual hiding-places within the preserve, will run with great swiftness through the underwood to the side hedges or adjoining fields, rather than rise and be shot at; one can hardly blame them for this, although it is vexatious to the shooter desirous of filling

his bag. We are told by old sporting writers, that the custom once was to send into close covers an old steady pointer with a bell round its neck; when the tinkle-tinkle ceased, the master knew that a point was made, and accordingly he made up to that point, if we may be forgiven for so detestable a pun; but this tintinnabulary practice has now grown into disuse; that it was ever a very successful one we cannot think; indeed, a modern writer upon this style of shooting remarks that, 'when a man goes out with his pointers and bells, he ought not to forget the cap for himself.' It has been remarked by those accustomed to this pursuit, that Pheasants seldom take long flights, that is, when flushed in extensive woods, or in any locality where cover is plentiful; they rise suddenly with a loud *whirr*, which makes an inexperienced shooter feel quite nervous, and often causes him to miss his aim. Up goes the noble bird with a strong bold flight, as if it meant to fly right away to lands beyond the sun; but ten to one if it does not drop again as suddenly as it rose, within a hundred yards of the same spot; down it plumps right to the very bottom of the hedge or leafy thicket, and there it crouches as still as if it had been shot, and you must not expect to get it up again unless the stick of the beater or the nose of the dog almost touches it. Your canine assistant will not be guided to its hiding-place by the scent, for the bird has come down almost perpendicularly from a considerable height, and has left no trail along the ground. The hen Pheasant, when sitting, will frequently drop upon her nest in the same manner.

'During the winter,' says Craven, 'turnip-fields, in the neighbourhood of covers, about three in the afternoon, are good places for Pheasants: by beating from the covers, with a steady dog, you will get far better sporting. Your dog should quarter from your signal, and drop at wing or shot, on the instant.' Many shooters prefer this kind of sport late in the season, when the trees are in a great measure denuded of foliage; the birds can then be more easily seen and followed, and they are then, too, fully grown, and carry plenty of flesh, weighing oftentimes as much as three pounds. We find it mentioned in the Transactions of the

Linneæan Society, that, at Campsay Ash, where the Pheasants are well fed with potatoes, buckwheat, and barley, a cock bird has been killed which weighed four pounds and a-half; and Yarrell records several instances of a similar weight having been attained—something like a roast, this. The following is the method of cooking an old cock, recommended from experience, as he says, by Daniel, in his ‘Rural Sports’: — ‘After due keeping, stuff the bird with the lean of the inside of a sirloin of beef, cut into thin slices, and well seasoned; the gravy issuing from the beef gradually diffuses itself through the flesh of the game, and renders it mellow and juicy.’ Scott, in his ‘British Field Sports,’ says that ‘the hen Pheasant is the most juicy and fine-flavoured, and that it was customary, in Suffolk, to make the addition of oysters to the gravy for hare and Pheasant.’ And now we have got into the kitchen, we cannot help making an allusion or two to the gustatory associations of this bird, with the delicate richness of whose flesh it appears that the monks of France, in the olden time, were well acquainted, since they wished to monopolize it. One of their celebrated preachers, about the year 1216, represented, in one of his sermons, the Pheasants, Partridges, and Ortolans as addressing themselves to the clergy, and entreating to be eaten by them, and them only, that, ‘incorporated with their glorious bodies, they might be raised to heaven, and not go with impious devourers to the infernal regions.’ At a later period, the Pheasant appears to have been held in some measure sacred, since, in the year 1415, we find Philip, Duke of Burgundy, at a great feast, at which were assembled all his nobility, swore a most solemn oath *over a roasted Pheasant*, that he would march against the Turks, who had just overthrown the Grecian empire. His barons all entered into the same tremendous engagement; but none of them, it appears, ever stirred towards the performance of the vow: so says the author of ‘The Sportsman’s Cyclopædia;’ but this we hold to be a shameful libel on the stimulating and ennobling power of Pheasant’s flesh, which is now in this country regarded as a great epicurean dainty, and has long been so, if we may judge by the allusions made to it by our old dramatists.

Fetch me a pheasant, or a brace of partridges,
From goodwife poulterer, for my lady's supper,

says Ben Jonson, in his 'Staple of News;' and Prigg, in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Beggars' Bush,' makes this modest demand :

I must have my capons,
And turkeys brought me in with my green geese,
And ducklings in the season ; fine fat chickens ;
And if you chance where an eye of tame pheasants
And partridges are kept, see they be mine.

With all his love of good eating, we question if this luxurious dog would have relished the repast provided by the old pastoral poet, William Browne :

Pheasant and partridge into jelly turned,
Grated with gold, seven times refined and burned,
And dust of orient pearl.

Archbishop Neville, we are told, somewhere about the middle of the fifteenth century, made a great feast, of which two hundred Pheasants formed a part, reminding us of the luxurious repasts of the ancient Romans, with whom, for a time, this bird bore the palm, on account of its novelty and expense. Heliogabalus, in his ostentation, is said to have fed his lions with Pheasant's flesh—right royal fare for the imperial brutes.

The earliest English writer who mentions the Pheasant is Echard, whose 'History of England' bears date 1299 ; the market price of the bird was at this time 4*d.* ; in 1512 we find it set down at 1*s.* 3½*d.*, a very considerable sum in those days. 1250 was, according to Daniel, the date of its first introduction into Europe. Jason of the Golden Fleece and his Argonauts are said to have brought it from the banks of the Phasis—a river of Colchis, in Asia Minor ; hence the name *Phasianus* in Latin, *Faisan* in French, *Fagiano* in Italian, and Pheasant in our own language, and hence also the specific distinction *colchicus*. When Pheasants were first preserved in this country we have no means of ascertaining ; but it must have been long since, as we find entries in the household books and privy purse accounts of various noble families, which show that they were, at a

very early period, highly valued as table delicacies, and that means were taken to protect them and keep up the breed. We are told that they are still found in great beauty and abundance in the quarter of the globe whence they originated, and especially about the banks of that ancient river Phasis; but so kindly have they taken to our soil and climate, that, notwithstanding the murderous onslaughts annually made upon them, we question if rocky Colchis itself, or, as we now say, Mingrelia, could furnish such good sport for the pheasant-shooter as our own green woods and fields of fruitful tillage. All through the country, as far north as Northumberland, we find it diffused; of course, much more plentiful in some localities than in others, according to the care bestowed on its preservation, and to the character of the scenery. It loves woods with a thick undergrowth of long tangled grass, and thorny brakes, and ferny hollows, where the foxglove and the wild hyacinth spread a purple flush through the cool shade; the hazel copse and shrubby plantation it loves, and the ozier holt or marshy island, overgrown with reeds and rushes; wood and water it *must* have, and plenty of them, or it will soon die out, or fly away to lands more congenial to its nature. It may be found in the thick hedgerows, and corn fields, and clover patches; but its home is not there; it wants a world of greenery to wander in—a wild free sylvan tract—where it may at least fancy itself secure from man and his misdoings. Although, as it were, a semi-domesticated bird, depending on human aid for its very safety and means of existence, yet is it one of the shyest and wildest of all the creatures about us. It will not ‘come and be killed’ like a duck, or a barn-door fowl; will not listen to the voice of the charmer, ‘charm he never so wisely;’ but persists in disbelieving in the benevolent intentions of its pursuer, and in hiding away in the thickest coverts, and crouching close like a heap of dead leaves that have been transmuted into gold by the autumn sunshine. Oh! a glorious bird; but unsociable, *very*; and to preserve its life would persist in getting away if it could, although it knew that you would kill it in the most scientific manner, without ruffling a feather, and that you had tramped for

hours and hours in search of it, and were likely to return home with an empty game-bag.

The Scotch naturalist, Macgillivray, seems to think Pheasant-shooting but poor sport; he says—‘I am much inclined to persuade myself that a brace of Ptarmigans brought home after a hard day’s marching, from the craggy summit of some misty hill in the Gael land, could afford more pleasure than a whole thicket full of Pheasants.’ There spoke a true son of

The land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood.

But those who dwell amid the tamer although not less beautiful scenery of England, may find a pleasure in traversing the chalky downs of Sussex, the green hills of Surrey, or the fertile valleys of our own lovely Kent, in pursuit, at once, of health, and the golden-plumed bird with the burnished neck, and eye bright as a diamond in a crimson setting. Hear how enthusiastically Knox, in his ‘Ornithological Rambles in Sussex,’ speaks of the pleasures of such pursuits. After alluding to the murderous battue, which he utterly condemns, he says, ‘How different is the pursuit of the Pheasant with the aid of spaniels in the thick cover of the Weald, or tracking him with a single steady setter among some of the wilder portions of the forest range! Intently observing your dog, and anticipating the wily artifices of some old cock, with spurs as long as a dragoon’s, who will sometimes lead you for a mile through bog, brake, fen, and heather, before the sudden drop of your staunch companion, and a rigidity in all his limbs, satisfy you that you have at last compelled the bird to squat under the wide holly bush, from whence you knock him up, and feel some exultation as you bring him down with a snap shot, having only caught a glimpse of him as he endeavoured to escape on the opposite side of the tree.’

A singular circumstance connected with the Pheasant is, that the females sometimes assume the plumage of the male, and when this is the case it is advisable to destroy them, for they are incapable of performing the maternal functions, and are generally fierce and mischievous, fre-

quently destroying the eggs of the other birds, and tearing the young in pieces like hawks. 'They may be known,' as Yarrell says, 'by their partial want of brilliancy of tint; the golden red feathers on the breast generally want the contrast of the broad dark velvet-like margin; the legs and feet retaining their smaller and more female character, and are without spurs.' Another indication would be the smallness of size, and the absence of the short husky crow which distinguishes the cock, and which, as we have had occasion to observe, is seldom heard except at the breeding season. Usually, on going to roost, the male Pheasant makes a noise, which is called *cocketting*, and which he repeats several times; the hen bird, as she flies up, utters one shrill cry, and then ceases. These are like notes of invitation to the watching poachers, who, thus informed, know exactly where to pitch upon their birds; indeed, the peculiar habits of this species of game afford great facilities for its death or capture by the midnight depredator, while its great size and value renders it especially tempting to the needy and dissolute; the average weight of the male bird is about two pounds and a half, but it has been known, as before observed, to weigh as much as four pounds and a half.

The white ring which is observable around the necks of those birds, which are called on that account Ringed Pheasants, does not appear to indicate a difference of species, although Temminck and some other authorities have considered otherwise. Most modern ornithologists agree to look upon this ring but as a mark of variety; in some particular districts it prevails to a very great extent, in others it is rarely seen. The birds which have it, and those which have it not, breed together freely. It is the same with the pied and pure white Pheasants, which are not uncommon. Instances are recorded of the Pheasant having paired with the Black Grouse, Guinea Fowl, and even the Turkey; a cross with the domestic fowl is by no means unfrequent, but the hybrid offspring is always unproductive.

There is no other member of the magnificent *Phasianidæ* which can be called a British bird, although some others

are known to us, and even breed in this country; such, for instance, as the Gold and Silver Pheasants of China (*P. pictus* and *P. nycthemerus* of Linnæus). Later introductions are the Horned or Impeyan Pheasant from the Himalayan mountains of India (*Lophophorus Impeyanus*), and Reeves' Pheasant (*Syrmatrirus Reevesii*) from China. But these illustrious strangers do not come within the scope of our present subject, the Pheasants of the British preserves, of whose sylvan home Mary Howitt gives us the following charming picture :

The stockdove builds in the old oak wood;
The rook in the elm tree rears her brood;
The owl in a ruin doth hoot and stare;
The mavis and merle build everywhere:
But not for these will we go to-day,
'Tis the pheasant that lures us hence away;
The beautiful pheasant, that loves to be
Where the young green birches are waving free.

Away! to the woods, with the silvery rind,
And the emerald tresses afloat in the wind;
For 'tis joy to go to those sylvan bowers,
When summer is rich with leaves and flowers;
And to see, 'mid the growth of all lovely things,
The joyous pheasant unfold his wings,
And then cower down, as if to screen
His gorgeous purple, gold, and green.

Oh! beautiful bird, in thy stately pride,
Thou wast made in a waste of flowers to hide,
And to fling to the sun the glorious hues
Of thy rainbow gold, thy greens and blues!
Yes, beautiful pheasant, the birch-wood bowers,
Rich many-formed leaves, bright-tinted flowers,
Broad masses of shade, and sunshine free,
In thy gorgeous beauty, are meet for thee.



PARTRIDGE.

CHAPTER III.

PARTRIDGES AND QUAILS:—THE COMMON AND RED-LEGGED PARTRIDGES — COMMON, ANDALUSIAN, VIRGINIAN, AND CALIFORNIAN QUAILS.

PERDEX is the name given to the typical genus of the *Perdicinæ*, *Perdicine* birds, or Partridges, which are mostly robust birds, with full and rather heavy bodies, and short necks; short strong, and slightly-curved beaks; small and rather oblong heads, and short, stout legs, covered with scales or feathers. Some species have a spur behind, denoting their affinity with the *Gallinæ*, all of which have it. They have full, soft, compact plumage, generally of grey, brown, and dusky red colours, prettily mottled and blended so as to produce an harmonious effect. The Partridges are pretty generally distributed over the world, but occur mostly in warm and temperate climates. They live on vegetable substances, such as seeds, buds, and the herbaceous parts of plants. They are of timid and retiring habits, have a strong whirring flight, and run with great speed when obliged to leave the covert which they prefer. We have two species in Britain, but the one most esteemed by sportsmen is

THE COMMON PARTRIDGE—(*Perdix cinerea*)—the best known, and perhaps most highly esteemed, of British game birds, than which none is more widely and generally

distributed throughout England, none more frequently brought into contact with man, and yet none more really and essentially *fera natura*. A wild, shy creature, that never can be domesticated, and yet one sees it, or hears of it, continually. We say never; for the instances in which it has been induced to become at all tame and familiar are so few, in proportion to the attempts that have been made to reclaim the bird from its wild state, that they can scarcely be cited but as rare exceptions to a rule. We believe that the bird has been known in only two or three instances to breed in confinement, and this is the grand test of thorough domestication. And yet the Partridge, so wild and shy in its nature, selects for its haunts the most highly-cultivated parts of the country, and seems to increase in exact proportion to the care and attention bestowed on the tillage of the soil. This is a very curious circumstance, and one, we believe, without parallel in the history of any of the animals indigenous to our islands, as the Partridge is. Wherever cover is found, and but moderate protection is afforded, there will this highly-valued bird increase and multiply; as Mr. Morris observes in his beautiful volume on 'British Game Birds and Wild Fowl,' it only wants 'fair play' to do so to almost any desired extent. But fair play it is not likely to get, while it is in such high request as an article of luxurious diet; and its destruction, both legal and illegal, will go on at a rate that must keep down its numbers, however prolific and hardy the bird may be. The flesh of no game bird is so delicate, and free from the strong and peculiar flavour to which many object, as that of the Partridge; hence its universal relish and estimation. According to an ancient couplet, it is but one point short of perfection:—

If the Partridge had the Woodcock's thigh,
It would be the best bird that ever did fly.

The old pastoral poet, William Browne, we may remember, recommends the flesh of this bird served up with gold and pearl dust—no doubt, a figure of speech, intended to show his high estimation of this kind of food. Perhaps, like Dominico, the harlequin of Louis XIV., we should

prefer the gold to the flesh of the bird. That astute court fool was, we are told, once at supper with his royal master, and fixed his eyes so intently upon a dish of partridges, that the king, with whom he was a great favourite, said to his attendants, 'Give that dish to Dominico.' 'And the partridges too, sire?' was the artful question. 'And the partridges, too,' responded the monarch. It is added that the dish was of gold.

We have already, in our account of the Pheasant, spoken of that French preacher of the thirteenth century, according to whose dictum the flesh of the Partridge should be eaten by the clergy only. We quoted, too, several passages from our old dramatists, which show that this article of diet was held in high estimation by our countrymen 'long, long, ago.' Did our readers ever hear the story of a Brace of Partridges, which is related by the people of La Bass Bretagne with much gusto over their winter fires? Here is one version of it:—

A certain *curé* had two Partridges, which he ordered his maid to dress for his Sunday's dinner. While he was saying mass, a female friend of the cook's called to have a chat with her, and was so tempted by the delicious odour of the birds, that she slipped off a wing, which excited her appetite so much, that she ventured to take a leg, then a bit of the breast; and her friend, the cook, being unable to withstand the temptation, followed her example; and thus, between them, both the Partridges disappeared.

When twelve o'clock struck, the cook found herself in a great quandary. But a mendicant friar just then coming to the door, her ready wit suggested the means of getting out of her difficulty.

She accordingly invited the friar to walk in, telling him that her master would be glad to see him, if he chanced to be in his right mind, but he had lately been insane upon one point; he had a fancy for cutting off the ears of his guests, but this possessed him only at times, and if he began to sharpen his knife, it was a sure sign that the fit was on him.

'So step into this closet,' she continued, 'when you hear him coming in from church, and you will soon be able to judge whether you may safely dine with him or not.'

Presently the *curé* came in, and the wicked cook requested him to go into the yard and sharpen the carving-knife; and while he was in the act of doing so, she went to the friar, drew him to the window, and bade him make his escape, as her master certainly had designs upon his ears.

Without waiting for a second warning, the friar darted off; and

the servant immediately raised a doleful cry, which brought her master in from the yard; when, pointing to the bare spit, she said—

‘Oh, dear! oh, dear! the two beautiful birds; it did me good only to smell them, and now they are gone: a thieving monk came in, and carried them away in his wallet.’

‘Where is he? Where is the thief?’ asked the disappointed *curé*.

‘There! there!’ said the servant, pointing to the friar, who was not yet out of sight. ‘Do you not see him, running away, like a rogue as he is?’

Carving-knife in hand, the *curé* set off in pursuit of the fancied robber, crying out at the top of his voice, as he found that he rather lost than gained ground—

‘Stop! stop! let me have one—at least one!’

But the fugitive, who imagined his ears were referred to, shouted back, without slackening his speed—

‘*Ma foi! monsieur le curé*, ye shall have neither the one nor the other.’

How the discomfited carer for souls bore his disappointment, and whether he ever discovered the cheat, the legend telleth not; we quote it as *apropos* to our subject. The idea, that Partridge’s flesh is fit food for the clergy, seems to be deeply rooted in the national mind of France, if we may judge by this little bit of popular ‘folk lore.’

But all this takes us away from the clover-field and the barley stubble, the turnip or potato patch, the vetches or feathery rye grass, from amid which the stealthy and sure-scented dog most frequently turns up the startled covey, with the well-known *whir-r-r-r* so pleasant to the sportsman’s ears; or where may be heard the call-note ‘*tezick, tezick*,’ to which he listens with no less pleasure and interest, as described by Gisborne:—

As when the gunner on his stubbly way,
Pausing his arms afresh to prime, suspends
The lifted flask, and his exploring ear
Turns if perchance the long-lost partridge calls.

In the poetry of Burns, and other Scottish writers, we find a name given to this bird which sounds strange in southern ears; for instance, in the lines on the death of Captain Henderson, we read:—

Mourn, ye wee sangsters of the wood!
 Ye grouse that crop the heather bud!
 Ye curlews calling through a clud!
 Ye whistling plover!
 And mourn, ye whirring *Paitrich* brood,
 He's gane for ever!

And again, in his epistle to Lord Rankine —

Twas ae night lately in my fun,
 I gaed a roving wi' the gun;
 And brought a *Paitrich* to the grun'—
 A bonnie hen;
 And as the twilight was begun
 Thought none wud ken.

He is, however, mistaken, for

Somebody tells the poacher-court
 The whole affair.

And the unlicensed sportsman has to pay the fee, which he does, vowing to take out the price, and more, next year in feathered game.

As soon's the clocken-time is by,
 An' the wee pouts begin to cry.

Not always does the Scottish poet apply this name to our favourite game bird, as will be seen by the following simile: —

As flies the Partridge from the brake
 On fear-inspired wings;
 So Nelly, startling, half awake,
 Away affrighted springs.

And this, too, is beautifully expressive of the shy, timid nature of the bird, ever hiding in the cover, and starting forth in great dismay and trepidation at the sound of an advancing footstep, be it of dog or man, rising, as the poet has well phrased it,

On fear-inspired wings.

But fearful as the Partridge generally is, there are times when the maternal instinct overcomes the timidity of its

nature. When the female bird has laid her eggs, numbering from twelve to twenty, or more, which she generally does late in April, or early in May, in some slight hollow in the ground, lined scantily with dry leaves or coarse grass, she will sit upon them steadily, and even suffer herself to be touched and handled, without moving. It has sometimes come to pass that she has fallen a victim to that strong love of her offspring which is so remarkable a characteristic of many members of the brute creation, and of the feathered tribes especially.

An instance is recorded by Montagu of a hen Partridge, on the point of hatching, which was taken with her eggs in a hat to some distance, and continued to sit. Jesse tells us that a farmer discovered one of these birds sitting on its eggs in a grass-field, and that it suffered him to pass his hand frequently down its back without stirring or exhibiting fear; on the contrary, when he touched it, the bird pecked at his hand. The same naturalist also speaks of a case of removal of the eggs, by the parent bird, from a situation where they were in danger of being broken by the ploughshare; the nest was so close to one furrow, that the next would have undoubtedly engulfed it: but when the plough returned to the spot from the other side of the field, in about twenty minutes, the eggs, numbering twenty-one, had been removed to the hedgerow, where the Partridge continued the work of incubation until she hatched nineteen poults, and bore off her brood in safety. She was probably assisted in the work of removal by the cock; but, even with such assistance, one wonders how the task was accomplished, the distance being about forty yards. And then, how did the bird know that the plough would return, and probably destroy her precious charge? Instinct approached very near to reason here. Bishop Mant's lines here recur to memory; let us repeat them:—

Here, as the swarthy mowers pass
Slow through the tall and russet grass,
In marshall'd rank, from side to side,
With circling stroke and measur'd stride,
Before the scythe's wide sweeping sway
The russet meadow's tall array

Falls, and the bristly surface strows
With the brown swathe's successive rows.
Ah, take thy heed, nor on her nest
The partridge ill-secur'd molest!
Deep in the grass behold her sit;
Reluctant from her couch to flit,
Though the stout mower's whistling blade,
Incautious, her abode invade,
And threaten, 'mid the falling heap,
Away herself and brood to sweep.

We may here quote some remarks on the near approach to human reason displayed by this bird, from a book entitled 'The Marvels and Mysteries of Instinct':—

Among the remarkable examples in which a combination of instinct with a skill only to be derived from reasoning, founded on observation, has been shown by animals in the protection of their young, may be reckoned the arts employed by some birds to allure an intruder from the neighbourhood of their nests. Now, whether instinct and reason give mutual aid, we are not prepared to say. But it does appear to us that the presence of skill, and the power to observe, imply the presence of intelligence, and that the quality or strength of the latter, as the cause, must be in proportion to the displays of the former, as its products. Let us, therefore, take the case of the Partridge as an example, and endeavour to form some sort of estimate of the kind or amount of skill the stratagem of the old bird requires. Such estimate will then be a measure of intelligence, which must, on the intellectual theory, be accorded to those animals of the wing. If the act of the parent partridge in alluring away a stranger be a rational one, then it is contrived with wonderful ingenuity. Not only so, it is even more; for the birds adopt the most likely means possible of answering the end in view. And it must be remarked that human intelligence cannot improve their plan, that is, supposing it to be put into operation to mislead other animals, or even men, who had no previous knowledge or experience of the artifice. The plan is most complete in all its parts; and, under the circumstances just named, it is without a defect. The feathered strategists never make a mistake, so as to lead the intruder on to their brood of young; but the opposite direction is always unerringly taken. Their object in approaching so near the aggressor is evidently to induce him to throw his attack upon themselves; and what can be more tempting to their foes than this? They do more still. They actually tempt the enemy to persevere; and hence their wings are suffered to trail along the ground as if broken; hence also their leaps as if making an effort to fly, but cannot; and finally, their tumbles as if their legs were broken. What man or animal will not these exhibitions tempt to pursue? None. The temptation is almost irresistible; yet this

is the art of a bird. The power, then, that contrives the plan is a master of all the circumstances; and surely that which operates so infallibly, so as not to be open to even a suggestion from human intelligence, yet possessed by a bird, is a faculty very different from man's intellect. If the design, therefore, is the result of skill and observation, the intelligence of the partridge is superior to human reason; but its being partly skill and observation, and partly instinct, is a combination we cannot understand. It is just like instinct in all its particulars, and instinct we call it. All Partridges do it uniformly, and all equally perfect. The bird that has never had a brood of young before, will go through the operation as skilfully as one that has had twenty. This is instinct with a witness, and we do not see the necessity or the use of bringing in any other power as an explanation to the phenomenon.

Partridges, too, will often fight desperately with other birds in defence of their young. That arch-depredator the Carrion-Crow has been attacked by a pair of them, and obliged to surrender the nice young fledgling which he had seized for the purpose of making a feast; and when a Kite has been hovering over a brood of young Partridges, the parents have been known to fly up, screaming and fighting with all their might, in order to beat off the assailant. But instances of this kind might be multiplied to almost any extent, did we deem it necessary to call more witnesses into court, to prove that under some circumstances the Partridge will fight, and desperately too, for all its natural timidity of character.

Haste, ere the sun hath drunk the dews:
Boon Nature to her banquet woos;
Around, the smiling fields no more
Are waving with their golden store;
Homeward bears the loaded wain,
The golden glories of the plain;
And nut-brown Partridges are seen
Gliding among the stubble screen:
There's joy and gladness in the skies;
Loiterer, from thy couch arise!

Thus singeth Craven, in the 'Sporting Review,' bidding his slumbering brother-sportsman bestir himself, to brush with hasty steps the grass of the upland lea, while the dew-drops yet glisten in the level sunbeams, and the shadows of tree and stile, of man and dog, are projected far across the land-

scape; when the lark at heaven's gate is singing a matin song, to which we may well fancy angels, as they lean over the crystal battlements, must love to listen; and young Aurora, as the old poets have it, dons her saffron robe, and all is fresh and fair, and joyous and delightful.

Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
 For Phœbus 'gins to rise;
 And winking marybuds begin
 To ope their golden eyes.

But with the poetical associations of morning we dare not trust ourselves, or they will take us among the clouds, and the sky-kissing mountain peaks, and places where the most adventurous sportsman would find it impossible to follow. Let us, therefore, descend to earth and homely prose, and tell the shooter, that as it is the early bird that catches the worm, so it is he who is soonest a-field who most assuredly bags the bird. Thomas Hood said, we remember, that it served the worm right for being up before the bird, and that 'one who is so fond of stirring, must be a spoon.' But though we are quite disposed with him to sing the praises of

Bed, bed, bed delicious bed!
 That heaven upon earth to the weary head—

yet do we hold that on a bright September morning it is best to be up and away, while the covies lie close among the stubble, and the air is cool and bracing. It may be all very well, if you have no great distance to walk, and are satisfied that your ground will not be previously beaten, to take the field by nine o'clock or so; but if you have to compete with other shooters, licensed or unlicensed, by all means go early, for then you will be most likely to realise the picture drawn by Craven, in which

Nut-brown Partridges are seen
 Gliding among the stubble screen;

or crouching closely in the cover of the high grass, or standing corn, if any be left, or in the potato field. Thus early in the day, and especially if it be early in the season too, when put up they will not fly far; the report of the gun

will make even those which are not injured drop, and lie as if dead, it may be close to you, but it is generally into some thick bush, growing crop, or rank herbage, where it is difficult for the best-reared dog to find them. Hence the advantage of having markers to notice where they alight. If markers are not at hand to perform this service, beat for the missing birds as closely, as Craven says, as if you were looking for a needle in a barrel of hay. According to this authority, 'it ought to be the shooter's axiom that a bird which he *has* seen is worth a score that he *hopes* to see. Besides, nothing tends to make dogs more industrious and confiding—the latter a great point—than making them work on a spot where you are certain they will find, and where they *do* find. In such cases, too, the odds are you kill your bird or birds; and your four-footed friend looks you in the face, as who shall say "all's well that ends well." The best spots for finding Partridges are the wheat stubbles, and the clover and potato fields, the furze covers, and the ferny heaths, and grassy warrens, and plantations with their undergrowth of

Grasses green, and grasses golden,
On their slender stems upholden,
In the breezes waving, bending,
Grace unto the field-paths lending;
Banks and hedge-rows glorifying,
In their feathery lightness vying
With the gauze-wing'd fly, that flitteth
Gaily over them, or sitteth
For a moment 'mid the tangles
Of their tresses, where, like spangles,
Dewdrops hang, and gleam and glitter
All around the joyous sitter.

In places such as these the best single and double shots are to be obtained, and the greatest number of 'birds' are to be bagged. And this reminds us that we call Partridges 'birds' *par excellence*, as, taking precedence of all other feathered game, they are *the* birds, plump, juicy, and delicious; *national* too, the commoner grey species perhaps exclusively so; and this gives it a double value in the eyes of John Bull, who dearly loves a thing which is his own, and nobody else's. Not an amiable trait this in his character;

but let us call it a pardonable weakness, in which we all participate: our authority 'Craven' does so, evidently; for, speaking of the red-legged species, of which we shall have more to say presently, he says that it is 'a foreigner of recent introduction (and, like other foreigners, if we had never seen him it would have been no great loss).'

From the first of September to the first of February is the time when, according to act of parliament, those who have game certificates may shoot Partridges without stint or measure, provided always they trespass not upon forbidden ground. Those who have manors of their own find it best to wait until the 20th or so before they commence, and finish on Old Twelfth Day; the birds are more plentiful, and afford better sport.

The mention of 'ordinary sporting' reminds us of a mode of taking Partridges practised by the Gauchos of South America, which perhaps our readers will think rather extraordinary. A noose fixed to the end of a rod is the only instrument used by the native, whose quick eye, as he rides at a gallop, detects the bird crouching amid the herbage of the wide grassy plain. He instantly brings his horse upon its haunches, and forms round his victim, at first a distant, and then by degrees a nearer circle. The poor bird meanwhile sits like a creature bewildered, watching the noose as it approaches nearer and nearer, but apparently having no power to fly from the danger. At length its neck is caught in the fatal snare, with a sudden jerk it is tightened, and the bird is drawn up like a fish by an expert angler, and pays for its stupidity with its life. In our own country an ingenious method of capturing Partridges is sometimes resorted to by members of the poaching fraternity. When birds have gone to rest in their usual way, lying in a group, with tails meeting in the centre and heads pointing outward, like the radii of a compass, they turn a well-trained setter dog into the field, or cover, with a lantern attached to its head: all the while this light continues moving about they know that a find has not been made; but as soon as it becomes stationary, they cautiously approach the spot with a net, with which they generally manage to secure the whole covey: more commonly, however, the net is used

without the dog and light ; it has a bullet attached to each of the four corners, and is carried by as many men, just clear of the bushes ; when the birds are disturbed by the feet of the poachers they begin to flutter, and then the net is dropped over them ; in this way a large space of good shooting ground is sometimes cleared in a single night. Let us give an instance : — Late one fine September afternoon, as mine host of the Spotted Retriever was standing at his door, smoking his pipe, and speculating on the probabilities of a good shooting season, there came bowling along the road, at a smartish pace, a tidyish looking dog-cart, drawn by a horse that could move, and in it were four persons whom Boniface at once concluded to be sporting gents, although he saw no guns, these being, as he supposed, stowed away beneath. Pulling up just as they reached the inn, the driver, in a very familiar and patronising tone, inquired if this was the village of Hookey-in-the-Hole, close by Ferny Manor. With a bob of his bullet-head, Joe Swiller answered that it was, and thereupon received a gracious command to call the ostler, and have the prad properly seen to, and the trap put under cover. The four gentlemen descended from the vehicle, and after them sprang into the road a lanky, wicked-looking dog, of no particular breed, but evidently well-trained and intelligent. Walking into the parlour, they ordered brandy-and-water and cigars, requested Joe to supply himself also with these creature-comforts at their expense, and favour them with his agreeable company. There was no pride about them, not a bit, although it was clear they were persons of distinction, for one was called by his companions Lord Harry, and another Sir James. They called Joe old fellow, clapped him on the back, inquired about his wife and family, especially about his grown-up daughters, with whom they hinted they should be happy to take tea, and were remarkably free and jolly. Joe had a variety of sporting anecdotes to tell them, for he had been in his younger and more sober days a remarkably good shot ; and there was not an inch of ground in Ferny Manor that he could not go over now blindfolded. Well, if ever a man was pumped thoroughly dry, Joe Swiller was, that memorable afternoon. His guests plied him

with questions and drink, and seemed never tired of listening to his descriptions of the haunts of the furred and feathered game thereabout. They had, they said, at the invitation of the noble owner of the manor, come down for a few days' shooting, and as he seemed to know the ground so well, would be glad to take him for their guide, as they did not wish to trouble his lordship's keepers, and to pay him handsomely for his trouble: they would also stop at his house during the time of their sojourn in the neighbourhood. 'They might go to the hall if they choose, but preferred to be quite unfettered in their movements.'

Here was good fortune for Joe: such capital fellows—so free, and so liberal—in promises. After tea, at which Mrs. Swiller presided, and was taken for one of the grown-up daughters, and, like them, chucked under the chin, and called 'My dear' by these familiar guests, they expressed a desire to look about them a little, and Joe was asked to commence the performance of his duties of *cicerone*, preparatory to the shooting campaign which was to open on the morrow. So Joe took them along by Sandy Bottom, and through the Hazel Copse, and across Stony Ridge, to the Ferny Hollow, where was the rabbit warren, closely bordering upon the clover and stubble fields, and the waste lands covered with tall flowering grasses and furze bushes, and where you could hardly step without putting up a covey of Partridges. Joe's visitors were especially interested in this piece of ground, which they examined very carefully, and ascertained how it could be best reached in a trap, as they would like to commence there in the morning, and wished to come fresh upon the ground. All this time their dog followed closely at their heels, looking as if he did not know a partridge from a pump; but a close observer of canine physiognomy might have noticed that he cast at every step furtive glances around, and seemed to be measuring the ground as he went.

Fully satisfied, as it seemed, with the result of their stroll, the party returned to the inn, had more cigars and grog, got Joe into a glorious state of intoxication, and were just about to retire to rest, when Lord Harry discovered that he had lost his gold repeater: he recollected having it

when he was stooping down to examine a spot, where Joe told him Partridges were accustomed to nestle, and hearing something fall, which he has no doubt was the watch, he feels sure he can put his hand on the very place, and must go at once to seek the lost treasure. His companions laugh at, and try to dissuade him, but all to no purpose—go he must: so the horse is put into the trap, a lantern borrowed of the ostler, and off they go, never more to return. The next day Joe receives by coach a brace of partridges, with a note expressive of thanks for his hospitality and successful endeavours to make his guests acquainted with the best poaching points of Ferny Manor, to the owner of which he is requested to present the birds, as he may perhaps find that they are rather scarce this summer, especially in the cover by the warrens, from which and the surrounding fields about fifty brace had been taken in the night by the gentlemen, who herewith subscribed themselves his obliged and obedient servants. ‘Ah!’ said Jenkins, the keeper, to Joe, as he related how neatly he had been done, ‘that accounts for the twinkling kind of light, like a Will-’o-the-wisp, which I saw moving about among the grass and clover last night. It was your lantern tied to the dog’s head: it scared me not a little, I can tell you, for I thought there were ghosts abroad.’ Jenkins lost his place; but nobody thought he cared much about that, for very soon after he married Joe Swiller’s eldest daughter, and opened a poultry and game shop in the neighbouring town: of the latter he always had a plentiful supply, and people did say that much of it came from Ferny Manor. Certain it is, that ‘Lord Harry’ and ‘Sir James’ occasionally visited him, in their dog-cart, late at night, or quite early in the morning, and it was more especially after such visits that he had the best stock of hares, partridges, and pheasants. But who shall say that he did not obtain them honestly? Certain it is that in him Lord —— lost a good keeper: game was never so plentiful on the manor after he left as it had been before—a plain proof that it was not so well preserved.

Do you hear the partridge calling
In the grass and clover patches?
Stars are twinkling, dews are falling,
And the lonely keeper watches.

Hark; *tzick, tzick*; the grasses rustle,
 Telling of impending danger;
 Ah! what means that stir and bustle?
 Voices, too! 'Down; hide thee, ranger!'

Crouch below the fence, and, peeping
 Cautiously the bushes over,
 See the wary poachers creeping
 Through the stubble to the cover.

Leaded net between them bearing
 On the sleeping covey falling;
 Soon the booty they'll be sharing —
 Profits of their *honest* calling.

Through the copse sounds shrill the whistle,
 O'er the fence leap dog and keeper;
 Ha! away through gorse and thistle,
 Who'd escape must be no creeper.

Now the staunch dog gains upon them,
 Close and fast the keeper follows;
 What unmanly fear hath won them,
 Plunging 'mid the ferny hollows?

Four to one, and yield their booty?
 Nay, the love of gain is stronger —
 Stronger than the sense of duty,
 And the chase is urged no longer.

Keeper now, and night marauders,
 On the greensward sit together;
 There's no safety in *those* borders,
 For the game, in fur or feather.

Such we may imagine to be not an impossible termination to the discovery and pursuit of poachers by a keeper; but more generally the former will manage to escape with their booty, or if hard pressed will drop it, and make off as best they can. If, however, they be desperate and hardened villains, an affray takes place, and bloodshed is often the consequence; many a corpse, lying stiff and stark amid the ensanguined grass or woodland boughs, has been left as a ghastly memento of the fatal struggle, mutually appealing to the Great Avenger of all wrong and violence, and to the outraged laws and sympathies of humanity. What a fearful price has been oftentimes paid for 'a brace of birds' let the records of crime and punishment connected with

the operations of the Game Laws testify. It does not come within the scope and object of these papers to defend or condemn those laws; but fruitful sources as they have been and are of crime and bloodshed, we cannot help expressing our earnest desire for their alteration, so as to render them more in accordance with the humane and enlightened spirit of the times, or, if this be impossible, their entire abolition.

THE RED-LEGGED OR GUERNSEY PARTRIDGE—(*Perdix Rufus*)—a larger and more beautiful bird than the common grey species, but not nearly so good for the table, the flesh being comparatively coarse and dry. According to Daniel, it was first introduced into this country in the reign of Charles II., when several pairs were turned out about Windsor to obtain a stock, but these are supposed to have perished. Since then, others have at various times been brought over from the Continent, or from the Channel Islands, where they always existed in considerable numbers, and now in many parts of the country they have become the more plentiful, and, as they are in all cases, when brought into contact with the *Perdix cinereus*, the dominant species. This appears to be a bolder and less shy bird than the other, and one more capable of domestication. It has been known, not only to lay, but to hatch and rear its brood in an ordinary hutch; so that there seems no reason why it should not be added to our common stock of useful poultry. It would be necessary to have our enclosures netted over, or the birds when sufficiently grown would, no doubt, take to the woods and covers, as the Grey Partridges invariably do, when hatched, as they often are, under the domestic hen. Our sporting friends, we know, do not like this foreign species: it drives out the other they say, and makes but a bad substitute, on account of the inferiority of the flesh. In France, and elsewhere on the continent, it is greatly esteemed, and it no doubt formed the contents of the dish of which Louis XIV.'s harlequin Dominico became enamoured, as well as the dinner *in prospectu* of which the French *curé* was deprived, as previously related. There is reason to believe that this species occasionally makes its way

here without the aid of man, several having been found on the coasts in a nearly exhausted state, evidently from the effects of a long flight. It is not so entirely a ground bird as the grey kind, sometimes roosting, and even resting in trees; they seem, too, rather to prefer a hilly and heathy district to the cultivated bottom land. They are strong on the wing, wild, and difficult to shoot, 'and,' as Yarrell says, 'foot away before a pointer like an old cock grouse.' Their food is much the same as that of the common Partridge, like which they are monogamous, but are inclined to flock, or form considerable parties of several coveys. Their eggs, unlike those of the common species, which are of an uniform olive colour, are spotted and speckled with reddish-brown, on a ground of rufus-drab; they are from fifteen to eighteen in number, and are generally found in some hollow or depression of the ground, lined with dry leaves or grass.

Many more anecdotes might be related, and interesting particulars given, illustrative of the character and habits of the common grey species, the bird which is so plentiful in Norfolk and some other English counties, that as many as eighty-seven and a-half brace have fallen in one day before a single shooter, thirty-four and a-half brace having been shot in a six-and-twenty acre piece of Swedish turnips. But we must bring our article to a close, just asking a question, by the way, before doing so. Why is it that a covey of Irish partridges will generally spring without uttering a call, while a Scotch covey shriek with all their might when sprung? This is stated on the authority of Thompson, and reverses the known characteristics of the unfeathered bipeds of the two countries—the demonstrative, noisy Irishman, and the silent, cautious Scotchman.

The following anecdote we quote as likely to be new to our readers: it is taken from a very recent number of 'Chambers's Journal,' and is, *if true*, an extraordinary instance of tenacity of life in the Partridge. 'This bird—an old cock, I warrant him—was knocked over in the usual way, "in stubble and turnips." He was picked up while yet struggling, and his head severely knocked on the stock of a gun by one of the party. He was then "hung by the

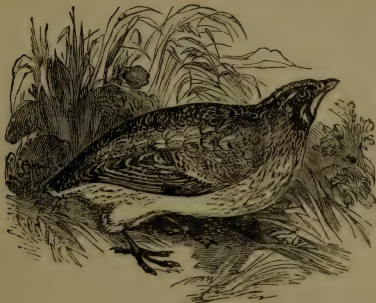
neck " with some others, in a net, by a leather strap, contrived for the purpose. In this durance, the poor animal remained during the rest of the day and the following night, being hung up with the bag in the gun-room. On the following day, when the keeper proceeded to hand over his prey to the cook, this bird was shaken out of his collar upon the table; whereupon he immediately got upon his legs, looked about him, flew straight to the window, through a pane of which he broke his way, and escaped.'

QUAILS.

These are birds, generally of small size, which by the older writers were classed with the Partridges; but recent ornithologists have formed of them a distinct genus, under the title *Coturnix*. They differ from the Partridges chiefly in having the head entirely feathered, the wings straighter and more pointed, and the tail smaller. The male birds are extremely pugnacious, and are said to be polygamous. In all other respects they are like their relatives, living on seeds, herbaceous substances, and insects, and frequenting grassy pastures, cultivated fields, and shrubby wastes. Quails are extensively distributed over the old continent, and are, some of them, if not all, migratory. But one species occurs in Britain, where it is merely a summer visitant, although occasionally individuals winter with us.

Whether the COMMON EUROPEAN, or WANDERING QUAIL (*Perdix Coturnix*), is the veritable Quail of Holy Scripture or not, is a disputed point; certain it is that it is a migratory species, and that it is found in vast flocks in many parts of the East, so as to give sufficient ground for the supposition that the children of Israel, in their journey across the desert, might have taken this bird in sufficient numbers to afford them sustenance. Travellers tell us that in Egypt, to this day, at the proper season, they are so abundant, that the people cannot consume those which they capture in a fresh state, and therefore salt them for future use; and have expressed their conviction that it needed but such a suitable wind as the Almighty sent, to

supply the great Hebrew host with a sufficient number to last for a month. It was a south-east wind, drifting over the desert from the Arabian Sea, with probably a bearing from Southern Persia, in which case it would cross the Persian Gulf. Now, we know that from these districts, including the *Arabia Felix* of Strabo, Quails, in countless numbers, literally darkening the air, might have been



QUAIL.

impelled, from those fresh and fertile feeding-grounds in Persia and Arabia, onward to the arid stony tracts to the east of the Red Sea. But, leaving the discussion of this question to biblical commentators, we will proceed to speak of this wide air-wanderer as a British and a sportsman's bird. In flocks it seldom visits our island until the end of May, but solitary individuals, and sometimes family groups, may be occasionally found here all the year round. It is known sometimes to breed with us, and appears to be on the increase; thus we learn, by a communication to *Notes for Naturalists*, that the proprietor of a portion of Lochar Moss, in Dumfriesshire, has observed that whereas 'fifteen years ago not an individual of this species was to be seen there, since that time two or three pairs have arrived yearly, and that recently the number of immigrants has increased. From 1853 to 1856, during the breeding season, the piping of the Quail was regularly heard, and several individuals

were seen; and in the summer of 1854, in cutting a field of grass, the mower came upon a nest, containing about a dozen eggs, with the bird crouching close to the ground.' The proprietor of the ground, wishing to keep the nest from harm, placed the leafy branch of a tree over it as a shelter; and soon the parent bird, who had fled at the approach of danger, returned, and sat out her time, although the gentleman and members of his family went frequently to look at her; and so little timidity had she, that she even permitted her visitors to approach within a foot of her, without exhibiting any signs of alarm: eventually, she led forth her brood unscathed. Again, in 1857, as we learn by the above-named periodical, the Quail has again been found breeding in the same locality. Thirty years ago, according to Sir William Jardine, these birds were tolerably common, and regular in their returns, and even in the south of Scotland a few broods were occasionally to be found. Macgillivray mentions their occurrence in Morayshire, and that he received a nest and eggs from Aberdeenshire. 'Its occurrence further north,' he says, 'has not been recorded. In these same districts they are now very uncertain; we have known of broods only twice, and occasionally have shot a straggler, apparently on its way to the south.' In England we meet with Quails chiefly in the southern counties; in the midland districts they are always rare, and more so as we advance northward. They cling pretty much to the low cultivated lands, but may sometimes be found on chalk hills of moderate elevation, especially where barley grows; their food consists of grain and seeds of various plants, with insects and their larvæ. They are decidedly polygamous, and at the breeding season very fierce and pugnacious. In consequence of this disposition, the Quail has been, and still is, in some countries, used as a fighting bird. There is a Greek proverb which runs—'As quarrelsome as Quails in a cage,' and among the ancients, Quail-fighting seems to have been as favourite an amusement as Cock-fighting was at one time in this country. With the Greeks, this bird seems to have been celebrated for its sweet voice. Athenius, we may remember, notices the song of

the Quail, which consists of a shrill piping note, like, as Bechstein tells us, *verru-verru*, followed by *peovoiree* several times repeated. There is a passage in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Humorous Lieutenant,' which has reference to the piping of this bird as a love-call :

CELIA.—Master, my royal sir, do you hear who calls you? Love, my Demetrius!

LEONTIUS.—These are pretty quail pipes; the cock will crow anon.

The common Quail is a pretty little bird, not much larger than the lark; in shape, it is much like the partridge, which it also resembles in the tints of its plumage and thickness of its legs; it lies very close, and may be easily passed over by the most observant sportsmen. When it rises, it does so with a suddenness quite startling to the nerves of a tyro in the use of the gun, and, instead of soaring, sweeps along in a straight line with great velocity. Except at the period of migration, a flock of Quails, which is called 'a bevy,' generally consists of two broods, varying from ten to twenty, or more, in number. Those which leave the country do so in September, or early in the following month; they generally set out on a moonlight night, and rest, except when journeying across a wide expanse of water, during the day. On the coasts, where they alight in an exhausted state, they are taken without difficulty by thousands. Temminck tells us that, on the coast of Naples, 100,000 has been estimated as the produce of a single day, and that within a comparatively limited space. At this period, the islands and shores of the Mediterranean absolutely swarm with them, and their wholesale destruction is effected not only by guns and nets, but sticks, and any missile that comes readiest to hand. We read in *Waterton's Essays*, third series, that, when visiting Italy, he has known 1,700 Quails to be brought to Rome for sale in the course of one morning. Such great quantities were captured in the Isle of Capri, near Naples, at the commencement of autumn, as, in former times, to afford the bishop the chief part of his revenue, and he was called, in consequence, the Bishop of Quails. According to Pliny, in his time they

sometimes alighted on vessels in the Mediterranean in such prodigious numbers as to sink them. Temminck thinks it probable that they emigrate for food, rather than to enjoy an uniform climate, and in this opinion Yarrell coincides, 'as the great changes of temperature in India do not influence the movements of this species, food being abundant at all seasons.' It is from France and the Netherlands that our markets are chiefly supplied with these birds, which are more plentiful in Ireland than in any other part of the United Kingdom. Those imported birds which we find in the London poultry markets in the spring, are chiefly males, and, says a writer in the *Illustrated News*, 'The reason why they are so is simply this; the males, in flocks, precede, by several days, the arrival of the females, and, like sailors from a long voyage, meet with "crimps ashore." Nets are prepared; the Quail-pipe, imitating the low note of the females, is heard; the male utters his clear whistling trisyllable *pee-voi-ree*, by way of answering; and, in this manner, scores at the time are drawn into the trap. The story has a moral, so it be read aright.' We may here fitly introduce Bishop Mant's lines, describing the natural phenomena of the month of May. He says:—

Less likely of your aim to fail,
 If with loud call the whistling *quail*
 Attract you, 'mid the bladed wheat
 To spread the skillful snare, and cheat
 With mimic sounds his amorous ear,
 Intent the female's cry to hear.
 For now the vernal warmth invites
 From Afric's coasts their northward flights;
 And prompts to skim on nightly breeze
 Sicilian or Biscayan seas.

Baron de Tott writes that no country abounds in Quails more than the Crimea. During the summer they are dispersed over the country; but, at the approach of autumn, they assemble together, and cross the Black Sea to the southern coasts, when they afterwards transport themselves to a warmer climate. 'The order of their migration is invariable. Towards the end of August, on a serene day, when the wind blows from the north at sunset, and

promises a fine night, they repair to the strand, and take their departure at six or seven in the evening, and have finished a journey of fifty leagues by break of day.'

As an article of food, the flesh of the Quail is much esteemed, although some consider it too heating to be quite wholesome. Yarrell says, 'I consider the Quail very heating food, and it is probable the French proverb, "hot as a Quail," may apply rather to its stimulative qualities than to its animal heat.' We would venture to suggest that the saying of our Gallic neighbours might have application to the bird's well-known pugnacity of disposition; the heat may probably refer to temper. The ancients, it appears, did not use this as a table bird, because, as Pliny tells us, 'they supposed it to feed on hellebore and poisonous seeds, and to be subject to epilepsy.' The market price of a Quail in this country, was, in 1512, 2*d.*; we now give about 2*s.* for one, so that it is rather expensive eating. The shrill whistling note of the Quail, which is generally repeated three times in rapid succession, is so seldom heard when the breeding season is over, that the males are then said to lose their voice. The nest is generally found among wheat, clover, or long grass; it is a mere hollow in the ground, lined with dry grass, straw, or clover stalks. The eggs, from seven to twelve in number, are white, tinged with yellowish red, blotched or speckled with brown; the female sits upon them three weeks, and the young follow her as soon as they are excluded from the shell, commencing, at once, to feed upon seeds, grain, insects, and green leaves. Partridge shooters often find and kill them in the wheat stubbles: when they have been once flushed and alarmed they are difficult to raise, lying very close until nearly trodden on.

There is little doubt that this is the bird called *Ortyx* by Aristotle; Buffon calls it *la Caille*, or *la Croquet*; in the ancient British tongue it is termed *Sofliar*.

THE ANDALUSIAN, OR GIBRALTAR QUAIL, OR HEMIPODE, is a bird of this genus, of which a few specimens have been taken in Britain. This is the *Hemipodous Tachydromus* of Gould, literally the 'half-footed swift runner,' nearly allied

to the fast-flying Hemipode of Australia; it is a solitary bird, with more distinct markings than the common species.

THE VIRGINIAN COLIN, or PARTRIDGE, as it is variously called, seems to supply a connecting link between the Quails and Partridges. It is the *Perdix Virginiana* of Wilson and Audubon—the *Ortyx Virginianus* of Bonaparte; it has been introduced into this country from America, where it is indigenous on both continents. Turned loose at various times on estates in different parts of this country, it does not seem to have much increased anywhere, and is with us still a comparatively rare bird. In habits and general conformation it is much like the Partridge, from which, however, it is distinguished by its smaller size and more strongly-marked plumage, having a white throat, a large patch of the same on each side of the head and down the neck, divided from the rest of the plumage by a broad collar of black. It flies with a whirring sound—straight, steady, and swiftly, and emits a shrill call, consisting of two short low whistles, followed by one long and loud.

THE CALIFORNIAN QUAIL is another species recently introduced into this country by Messrs. Baker of Chelsea; its remarkable peculiarity is a long and curiously-formed crest, erectible at pleasure, and a singular call-note, like the barking of a small dog, only much more shrill. It is a hardy bird, and may probably be acclimatised without much difficulty.

Craven says that the Quail 'is the daintiest of eating,' and this is reason good why it should be shot when and where it can be come at; for we hold it to be false humanity to spare any wild creature that can be converted into food for man, unless there is some better reason why it should be so spared than why it should be destroyed. Let us then by all means shoot Quails when, how, and where we can. Quail shooting, Craven tells us, 'is not legitimately a branch of English shooting;' nevertheless, we may add, there be many who occasionally follow it, and such

find in Ireland their most prolific fields of labour; in that country the bird seems to be a permanent resident to a much greater extent than it does with us 'domineering Saxons.' Again, to quote Craven, 'The English shooter lights upon Quails by chance among the Partridges in September; but the fresh amateur of the trigger falls in with them "all alone — by themselves" among the potatoes in October.' Formerly the Isle of Thanet, in Kent, was celebrated as abounding in Quails, where, a writer in the *New Sporting Magazine* says, they were to be met with at all seasons. So famous was this locality for this kind of sport, that people fond of it resorted thither from all parts. Latterly, our authority tells us, their numbers have considerably fallen off; but still the sportsman, in the beginning of September, may kill two or three brace a day. He further says that, 'Along the banks of the Thames below Purfleet, several farmers and sportsmen have assured us that, about the beginning of November, a time at which the departure of the main body has taken place, a small number of Quails make their appearance, and continue during the winter, always a short distance from the river's edge. They are evidently the young birds of the second bevy, who, for some reason, seek that particular situation after the migration of the rest of their species.'

Quails, although they are said not to 'pack' unless for migration, and from some local causes, are by no means such solitary birds as Snipes and Woodcocks: if the shooter sees one, he may be sure there are others not far off. They, like nearly all other shy, wild creatures, are retiring before the advance of cultivation, and the day will probably come when a Quail will be as rare in England as a Bustard.

Let us conclude this chapter with a query and a rhyme: 'Is it true,' as has been asserted, 'that a Quail that has been once enticed into a net by the call-pipe, will never again be tempted to listen to the call of the piper, let him pipe as long as he may?' Let us ask another question: How many Quails that have listened to the voice of the charmer, and become entangled in the fatal meshes, have escaped, and been in a position either to regard or disregard the call that lures to destruction? And now for a rhyme.

TO THE WANDERING QUAIL.

Whither away, O thou wandering Quail?
Whither away o'er the wide wild seas?
Hear'st thou a voice from some Persian vale?
Hear'st thou a call from the Cyclades?

The spring, with his mantle of green, hath fled,
And summer hath breathed her last perfumed breath,
And autumn is piping, in russet and red,
His call unto Winter, who bringeth in death.

Then whither away 'mid the shadows of night,
When ocean lies calm 'neath the smile of the moon?
Frail creature thou seem'st, for such wearisome flight;
Wilt thou rest in the south by to-morrow at noon?

I hear thy shrill piping; the flutter of wings
Is filling mine ears as I stand on the shore;
A cloud sweeps before me of shadowy things;
It is gone; in the distance I see it no more.

It is gone; like a smoke-wreath it melteth away,
And I hear the Quail piping no more on the hills;
But my thoughts wander with it, for many a day,
Through Italy's groves, and by Palestine's rills.

I see the grey pyramids piercing the skies;
I see the wide desert; and back to the past,
As I go with the Quail, ah! what visions arise,
Of human transgressions, and hopes overcast,
Of Divine retribution, *and mercy at last!*



RED GROUSE.

CHAPTER IV.

GROUSE : — THE RED AND BLACK GROUSE — CAPERCAILZIE
— PTARMIGAN.

THE Tetraonine Birds, as some naturalists term Grouse, are closely allied to the Pheasants and Partridges. They are generally bulky birds, with very full bodies, but moderately long necks, and small oblong-shaped heads. The bills and feet are short and stout : the former having the tips rounded, and the latter having the tarsus partially or entirely feathered ; the hind toe is small and somewhat elevated, and the claws are moderately long, arched, and blunt. The wings are short, convex, and rounded, and the tail generally short and broad. Members of this family are found chiefly in the arctic and temperate regions. They feed on twigs, buds, and herbage, and make their nests on the ground, the eggs being numerous, and spotted. They have a heavy, direct, but rapid flight, and run with great speed. The four species found in Britain are described in this chapter. Macgillivray divides them into two genera, to one of which he gives the name *Tetrao*, and to the other *Lagopus*.

There's a rush o'er the borders, of peer and of loon :
 Have ye heard that the Southrons are coming full soon ?
 Have ye heard that the cry hath gone up from the town —
 'Oh cast off the toga, and cast off the gown ;
 Leave the senate, the bar — leave the pulpit, the desk —
 Leave the Thames and its mud, for the Tay and the Esk —
 The sweets of Belgravia, the park's level sward,
 The lisp of my lady, the smile of my lord,
 For the rude Highland shieling, the bed of brown heath,
 And the rush of the torrent, Ben Nevis beneath —
 For the shrill salutation of Sandy at morn,
 And the eagle's wild scream, like a message of scorn !

Oh come ! for the heather has purpled the hills,
 The crags are all golden, and bright are the rills ;
 And far o'er the moorland the call of the bird
 By the ear of the sportsman delighted is heard ;
 The Grey-hen has led forth her fledglings to feed,
 Till they're heavy and plump, and are prizes indeed ;
 The Gorcock hath preened his red plumes in the sun,
 Till they seem the rich warmth of its beams to have won ;
 And the great Capercaillie hath crowed in the woods,
 'Mid the whisper of pines, and the flashing of floods,
 Till the slim lady-birches afar in the glen
 Seemed to dance, and shrill echo sent answer again.'

Yes, come to the mountain, and come to the moor ;
 We sound not the pibroch, nor draw the claymore :
 The sons of the mist to the Saxon give hail,
 And welcome them all to the land of the Gael !

The Twelfth of August ! This is the great annual exodus
 of the lovers of shooting and of healthful exercise — the
 going forth of all and sundry who can leave their daily
 avocations and cares, and enjoy themselves for a while amid
 the romantic scenery of Scotland the renowned and
 picturesque. Now it is, when a golden tinge begins to
 pervade the corn-fields, and the first leaves are turning
 brown, and in the valleys, and on the upland slopes, the
 gossamers are weaving their silver webs, that the land of
 the Gael is invaded by an army of eager sportsmen, intent
 on filling their game-bags, and proving that they have
 steady arms and quick eyes. In the rocky glen through
 which the whimpling burnie flows —

Where the Black-cock sweetest sips it,
 And the latest fairy trips it,

they who lately dwelt in the gilded saloons of Belgravia, lounged in opera or club house, and in the halls of legislature uttered words that ruled the destinies of nations, are content now to rest beneath the shelter of a Highland shieling, on a bed of fragrant heather, and to accept of such coarse fare as the situation affords. Noble lord, and most noble marquis, becomes for the nonce hail-fellow-well-met with the private gentleman, and even the banker's clerk, and works and eats (ye gods, how he does eat!) like a common man. Over the rough ground he goes (no carriage wanted now) from sunrise to sunset, feeling more strong, and fresh, and vigorous, at every step; and ten to one but you may hear him break out every now and then in a song, shockingly loud and ungenteel, something like that of the forester in 'Waverley' —

As up Glenburchen's braes I ga'ed,
 And o'er the bent o' Killiebraid,
 And mony a weary cast I made
 To crickle the Muir-fowl's tail;
 If up a bonny Black-cock should spring,
 To whistle him down wi' a slug in his wing,
 And strap him on to my lunzie string,
 Right seldom would I fail.

Or, rejoicing in his freedom from the conventional trammels of 'good society,' and all such vanities and vexations of spirit as kid gloves, cambric handkerchiefs, faultless neck-ties, and polished boots that must show no wrinkle, be the corns never so rebellious and protuberant, shouting forth at the top of his voice —

The moors! the moors! the spreading moors!
 The purple seas that have no shores!
 The hills sublime
 Who would not climb,
 All in this golden autumn time?

Ah! who indeed, the more especially when you may do it in high-lows and gaiters, and a hat of no particular shape, that is not stiff and intractable as a chimney-pot, but adapts itself nicely to the form of the head; and a coat with huge pockets, wherein may be stowed any quantity

of creature-comforts that the appetite may desire, and which is one of those accommodating 'textile fabrics' calculated for all weathers, and all circumstances, and all places, except Bond-street and 'the Mall.'

But let us not forget that we have here undertaken to speak especially of Grouse, which may be considered as occupying the place of the royal family among game birds: by sportsmen they are certainly held in the highest estimation, perhaps on account of the difficulties attending their pursuit and capture, for that is ever most valued which is least easy of attainment. Perhaps, also, the large amount of positive enjoyment which attends the pursuit of game in the wild solitudes of nature, amid which only the Grouse can be found, may greatly tend to give this species of game an increased value in the eyes of the lover of natural scenery especially. There is a wild delirious kind of joy, an unspeakable delight, in breathing the pure fresh mountain air, amid the wide, wild moors, that richly rewards the Grouse-shooter for his hardships and privations; his toilsome climbing up the steep ascents, and long, long walks over interminable moorlands; his desperate encounters with armies of old Scotia's emblems—the rough and sturdy thistles, and gorse and juniper bushes; and his wadings through burns and rivulets; not to speak of rain and mountain mist, and fog that wraps him about like a damp garment, as he goes ranging, as 'Craven' has it, 'up to his loins in a sort of vegetable ocean:' not to speak, either, of the days of cloudless splendour, when—

The silent hills and forest tops seem reeling in the heat;

when the gun-stock blisters the hands, and the skin peels from the face; and the panting dogs, with lolling tongues, are more eager for watercourses than birds, and the 'gillie' thinks 'she had petter rest awae' by the fountain in the glen, where the red berries of the rowan glisten amid the spray of the fall, and the bonny birks droop their light tresses unstirred by a breath of air. Oh, yes,—notwithstanding, we say, all drawbacks,—a marvellously pleasant life, is that of the free ranger of the hills and moors—

Though sluggards deem it but a foolish chase,
And marvel men should quit their easy chair,
The toilsome way and long long leagues to trace,
Oh ! there is sweetness in the mountain air,
And life, which bloated ease can never hope to share.

And now we are amid the haunts of the RED GROUSE—of the Grouse *par excellence*, variously called Red or Brown Ptarmigan ; Moor or Muir Fowl ; Moor Cock and Hen, and Gorcock ; the *Tetrao Scoticus* of Linnæus, Latham, Temminck, &c., the *Lagopus Scoticus* of Macgillivray, and *L'Altagas* of Buffon. Of all game birds this is perhaps most highly prized as a table delicacy. Its generic name, *Lagopus*, is from the Greek, and signifies hare-foot ; it has, like its congener, the Grey Ptarmigan, not only feathered tarsi, but the feet also are covered with thick short plumage. This bird is said to be peculiar to the British isles, and hence the suggestion has been made that its specific name should be *Britannicus*. It is found in the boggy wildernesses of Ireland, as well as among the Welsh mountains, and hilly districts of the more northerly English counties ; but in Scotland it is most plentiful, and therefore the generic term *Scoticus* would seem to be not inappropriate. When fully grown, the plumage of the cock is a rich sienna brown, beautifully waved, mottled, and shaded with lighter tints ; sometimes the throat assumes quite a coppery hue, and the belly deepens into black, or nearly so ; the tail of this bird is not forked, like that of the Blackcock, nor is it so long ; the feathers are dark brown, barred and edged with red ; it has the same rough scarlet spot over each eye as the other members of the Grouse family, and the legs are purely or almost white, offering a strange contrast to the rest of the plumage. The female is smaller in size than the male, which commonly weighs about twenty ounces, although it sometimes attains to thirty ; she is also of a paler colour, and has the scarlet patch about the eyes less distinct. Various berries, heath tops, and other mountain and moorland plants, form the common food of the Red Grouse ; when cultivated lands are near to its haunts, it will often visit the stacks, or cornfields, and make the farmer contribute to its

maintenance. It is not a shy bird, except in districts where it has been much molested, and there it becomes most wary and difficult of approach, lying *perdu* among the dark brown moss and heath, with which the colour of its plumage harmonises well: it is not easily discovered, except by the nose of the well-trained dog.

In the breeding season, which is early in the year, sometimes even in January, the colours of both cock and hen become brighter and more distinct. Unlike the Black Grouse, this species is strictly monogamous; it forms a rude nest of straw, dried grass, or leaves, in some rocky or sandy hollow, under a tuft of heather, or low bush, and lays from ten to fourteen eggs, of a dingy white colour, spotted with brown. The young are exposed to the attacks of many enemies, and are often destroyed, although the old birds defend them with great courage. The Hooded Crow appears to be one of the greatest depredators of the Grouse's nest: 'Compared with this crow,' says Knox, 'the eagle, the buzzard, and even the peregrine falcon herself, are almost innocent, and at least honourable enemies; nay, even the fox is harmless when measured by the same standard.' A good bait for this mischievous bird is stated by the same authority to be a trap artfully set in the mock nest of a Grouse, and baited with the egg of a gull, or any other bird, or the shell, emptied of its contents, and filled with melted fat and *nux vomica*. We should recommend strychnine as the more powerful and certain poison, and, from the small quantity necessary to be used, less likely to be detected by the wary depredator, whether furred or feathered.

It is to be regretted that the proper preservation of Grouse involves the destruction of many wild creatures, whose habits are highly interesting to the naturalist, if not to the sportsman. To give some idea of the indiscriminate slaughter practised by Highland game preservers, we may state, on the authority of Knox, that on the celebrated Glengary estate, between the Whitsundays of 1837 and 1840, there were destroyed the following numbers of what the keepers call 'vermin':—11 foxes; 198 wild-cats; 246 marten-cats; 106 pole-cats; 301 stoats and weazels;

67 badgers; 48 otters; 78 house-cats; 60 white-tailed, golden, and fishing eagles; 1,756 hawks, kites, falcons, and buzzards; 1,913 crows, ravens, owls, and magpies. Grand total of birds 3,667, of quadrupeds 1,055, in three years. 'The slaughter was carried on,' says our informant, 'by keepers, who received, not only liberal wages, but extra rewards, varying from 3*l.* to 5*l.*, according to their success in the work of extermination.' And probably the owner of the estate was well repaid for his expenditure, as we know that the right of shooting over a well-preserved Grouse cover is eagerly purchased at an almost fabulous price. Thus, on a station not far from Inverness, as much as five guineas per day has been given for leave to shoot 'twixt the light and the dark,' and that, too, with the condition, that the dead birds should be handed over to the renter. A Yorkshire gentleman, who had two days of this expensive sport, bagged in all 43 brace, which—calculated at 3*s.* 6*d.* per brace, about the market price—gave to the laird, or his lessees, 7*l.* 10*s.* 6*d.*, besides the 10*l.* 10*s.* paid for the shooting license; and the sportsman, unless he bought his victims back again, had not a single brace to send to his friends as a proof of his valorous achievements. We read of another Englishman, who gave to the canny Scot 35*l.* for a week's leave to shoot; but then he, we believe, had liberty to keep the game; as had, no doubt, a third, yet more magnificent in his operations, who paid down 300*l.* for the privilege of blazing away during the whole season over a piece of well-stocked land. He ought to have had relays of dogs and 'gillies,' with a whole armoury of Mantons, and have been enabled to supply game-dealers out of number, to make it pay.

Talking of game-dealers, *how is it* that these gentry get so well supplied with Grouse on the very day the season opens—often before the day—and that the birds which they sell frequently exhibit no sign of gunshot wounds? Verily, the Muir-fowl has other enemies besides those furred and feathered ones just spoken of. The net and the snare are frequently resorted to for their capture; and the nightly poacher reaps a considerable share of the profits of their preservation. It is, however, chiefly in the

winter that they are liable to these modes of destruction, as they are then less wild and wary than at other times, and, especially when the snow is on the ground, pack together in considerable numbers, seeking the shelter of the turf-stack, wall, or bank, or any other object which rises above the surrounding level. This may partly account for the circumstance that the London markets are generally well supplied with these birds up to about the middle of March. It has been said that in some districts of Scotland the landowners make more by their Grouse than by any other produce; and we can well believe it, for the lands where these birds are most plentiful, are barren and heathy.

To those who are about to 'rent a shooting,' we would, with 'Craven,' recommend circumspection. Not always are the crops so plentiful as they are represented, and the renter may find himself in the case of the individual immortalised by Joe Miller, who purchased an estate warranted to contain a 'hanging wood,' and found only a gibbet thereon.

'We imagine,' says the author of *Recreations in Shooting*, 'that a good many who have taken Highland quarters on the assurance that they would furnish red game, have discovered that the supply was chiefly confined to the carrotty gillies, who go with the ground in the capacity of markers—*lucus a non lucendo*.' Old sportsmen can remember the time when the Red Grouse was by no means scarce in many of the English counties; in none of them now can it be called plentiful, although it was but a few years since that forty-three brace were shot by a keeper on the Yorkshire moors before two o'clock in the afternoon of the 12th of August. Staffordshire and Derbyshire are now probably the southern limits of its range, and from these counties it is being gradually driven by the advance of cultivation, before which it invariably retires. A considerable extent of open mountain and heathery moorland seems necessary to its existence. It loves not woods of birch and reedy swamps, like the Blackcock; nor dark pine forests, like the Capercailzie; and although it does not retire so far from the ways of men as its near relative the Ptarmigan, which haunts the higher Alpine regions, yet must it have 'ample

scope and verge enough' for flight and feeding ground, and seldom will it breed and build, except it be miles away from human habitations and scenes of busy industry. Several attempts have been made to introduce it into counties from which it has disappeared, but without success; it will not remain within easy shooting distance, and it is perhaps valued all the more on this account. Like a coy beauty, it must be sought for, and wooed, before it can be won; and who shall say it is not worth the winning?

'Shooting Grouse after Red Deer,' says Christopher North, 'is for awhile at least felt to be like writing an anagram in a lady's album, after having given the finishing touch to a tragedy or an epic poem. 'Tis like taking to catching shrimps on the sand with one's toes, on one's return from Davis's Straits in a whaler that arrived at Peterhead with sixteen fish, each calculated at ten tons of oil.' Now it is all very well for that 'old man of the mountains' to talk thus, for he was, or would have us believe that he was, a mighty hunter; but those who live on the wrong side of the border, and cannot go deer-stalking whenever they have a fancy for venison, must content themselves with smaller game, and find shooting Red Grouse to be tolerably satisfactory sport. Old Kit is irate against such as go forth for the purpose of wholesale slaughter, and must needs bag three hundred brace from sunrise to sunset of the first day of the moors. We say nothing about the kind of emulation, or *esprit de corps*, which leads a shooter to bag as many head of game as he possibly can, and when his 'blood is up,' to commit havoc which he likes not to think about in his cooler moments, although this perhaps should be taken into account; but we do say that in Grouse, as in every other kind of shooting, except where the destruction of noxious and mischievous animals is the object aimed at, it is most reprehensible to 'blaze away' right and left, and do one's best to depopulate either a wild moorland or a carefully kept preserve. The true sportsman will say with our authority Christopher, 'Commend us to a plentiful sprinkling of game; to ground which seems occasionally barren; and which it needs a fine-instructed eye to traverse scientifically, and therefore to

detect the latent riches. Fear and Hope are the deities of the moors, else would they lose their witchcraft. A gentleman ought not to shoot like a gamekeeper any more than at billiards to play like a marker, nor with four-in-hand ought he to tool his prads like the Portsmouth dragsman. Shoot in a style equidistant from that of the gamekeeper on the one hand, and the bagman on the other, neither killing nor missing every bird; but in the true spirit of the Aristotelian doctrine, leaning with a decided inclination towards the first rather than the second predicament. If we shoot too well one day, we are pretty sure to shoot as ill another; in shooting, we shoot like gentlemen, scholars, poets, philosophers, as we are; and looking at us you have a sight

Of him who walks in glory and in joy,
Following his *dog* upon the mountain side;

a man evidently not shooting for a wager, and performing a match for the mean motives of avarice or ambition, but blazing away at "his own sweet will," and, without seeming to know it, making a great noise in the world.'



BLACK GROUSE.

Have you heard the Blackcock's husky crow
In the cool grey light of morning,
When the mists were on the vale below,
And the mountain tops were all aglow
With ruddy gleams, that served to show
The pathway of the dawning?

Have ye stooped among the heath and ling,
 To see the Grey Hen stealing,
 With her speckled pouts of tender wing,
 That closely to the covert cling,
 And fear to take the final spring,
 Their whereabouts revealing?

THE BLACKCOCK, which most naturalists term *Tetrao Tetrix* may be found in the greatest plenty and finest condition, amid the wide wild moors and sub-alpine sheep districts of Scotland.

Now wistlin' winds and slaught'rin' guns
 Bring autumn's pleasant weather,
 The Moorcock springs, on whirring wings,
 Among the blooming heather,

says Burns; and it is chiefly in those parts of the country, where the moors and mountain sides are purple with the blossoms of the *Erica*, that the Black Grouse must be sought for. It does not, however, mix with the red species, to which it is said to be a determined enemy; so that some Grouse preservers, observing that where the former increased, the latter decreased, have latterly determined to shoot the Grey Hens, in order to keep the stock under. This prejudice—as some who have had good opportunities of watching the habits of the birds hold it to be—has operated greatly in checking the importation of live Blackcocks into Yorkshire and some other English counties, where they were formerly introduced for the purpose of extending the breed. These North Britons it is now said must be kept *out*, if we would keep their red congeners *in*. Such is the impression entertained, whether true or false we cannot say, of their Scottish qualities. The counties south of the border which this breed is known to inhabit are Hampshire, in the New Forest, Somersetshire, Devonshire, Dartmoor, and Exmoor, and the wilder parts of Staffordshire and Lancashire, and Cheshire, in the forest of Delamere. Although often frequenting the open moorlands, they are partial to swampy lands of rank vegetation, and woody tracts where there is plenty of brushwood and deep fern: they feed on the young twigs and catkins of the alder, birch, and willow, in the spring; on heath tops and the

tender shoots of other bog and moorland plants in the summer; on cran, whortle, and other berries, in autumn; and on the tops and buds of the fir and other shrubs and trees in winter. Where, as is sometimes the case, their habitat is near to cultivated lands, they manifest a decided liking for cereal grains of various kinds, much to the annoyance of the farmer. They like best to build in or near swamps, or moist meadows, where they can lead their young to feed on the tender seeds of the grasses and rushes. The nest is rudely formed of twigs and grass, and placed on the ground sheltered by vegetation, or in a grassy tuft or low bush. The females are left to perform the work of incubation alone, and to bring up the young brood, which numbers variously from five to ten. The bird is polygamous, and in the breeding season desperate struggles ensue for the favour of the, at other times, neglected sex. The following is Sir William Jardine's graphic picture of what takes place on such occasions:—'In the warmer sunny days, at the conclusion of winter and commencement of spring, the males, after feeding, may be seen arranged on some turf-fence, rail, or sheep-fold, pluming their wings, expanding their tails, and practising their love-call. If the weather now continues warm, the flocks soon separate, and the males select some conspicuous spot, from whence they endeavour to drive all rivals, and commence to display their arts to allure the females. The places selected at such season are generally elevations; the turf enclosure of a former sheep-fold, which has been disused and is now grown over; or some of those beautiful spots of fresh and grassy pasture, which are well-known to the inhabitants of a pastoral district. Here, after perhaps many battles have been fought and rivals vanquished, the noble, full-dressed Blackcock takes his stand: commencing at the first dawn of day, and where the game is abundant, the hill on every side repeats the humming call. They strut around the spots selected, trailing their wings, inflating the throat and neck, and puffing up the plumage of these parts, and the now brilliant wattle above the eyes, raising and expanding their tails, and displaying the beautifully contrasted white under tail-covers; he is soon heard by the females, who crowd

around their lord and master. This season of admiration does not continue long; the females disperse to seek proper situations for depositing their eggs, while the males, losing their feeling for love and fighting, re-assemble in small parties, and seek the shelter of the brush and fern beds, to complete a new moult; and are seldom seen except early in the morning or at evening, when they exhibit a degree of timidity the very reverse of their former boldness and vigilance.'

Many sportsmen have remarked that it is a most difficult matter to get a shot at a knowing old Blackcock. Craven says that he is generally alone, or with half-a-score of other 'old cocks,' all on the *qui vive*. 'Early in the autumn the hens and young broods are not generally difficult of approach: they will lie close until almost touched by the nose of the dog; but later they, too, get shy and wary, and as their sense of smell is very acute, it is useless to approach them down the wind. . . . Then, they feed around the sheaves in societies of two or three scores, with sentinels ever on the alert. The best mode of out-general-ing them is before their feeding-time to ensconce yourself in a sheaf nearest the spot they resort to, and there wait their coming. Or place yourself behind the wall, with which the Highland field is sure to be fenced, and by poking a stone out of it you have a glorious embrasure.' For cover shooting this authority recommends a single beater with one old staunch dog, as far better than a crowd of gillies, making a great outcry and scaring the birds so as to break up the covers, and sending them to seek shelter elsewhere, perhaps miles away, where you cannot follow them.

Burns's spirited song, 'I rede you beware at the hunting,' although it applies, we suppose, more especially, to the female of the Red Grouse, yet describes equally well the wary habits of the Grey Hen.

The heather was blooming, the meadows were mawn,
Our lads ga'ed a hunting one day at the dawn,
O'er moors, and o'er mosses, and many a glen,
At length they discovered a bonny Moor Hen.

I rede you beware at the hunting, young men,
I rede you beware at the hunting, young men;
Take some on the wing, and some on the spring,
But cannily steal on a bonny Moor Hen!

They hunted the valley, they hunted the hill,
The best of the lads wi' the best of their skill;
But still as the fairest she sat in their sight,
When, 'Whirr!' she was over a mile at a flight.
I rede you beware at the hunting, &c.

In nearly all the hilly districts of Scotland the Blackcock may be found; his range extends as far up as Sutherlandshire, and stretches into the islands of Mull and Skye. In Ireland—where there are such large tracts of heath and bog land, and wooded mountains, just suited, as one would suppose, to its habits—it is altogether absent, or occurs very rarely. It is not, like the Red Grouse, confined to Britain, but has an extensive range over Europe, the northern parts being those where it is principally met with. Linnæus saw it high up in the forests of Lapland; and so plentiful is it in Sweden and Norway, that the London dealers, after the first four months of the season, derive their principal supply from those countries, where Grouse-shooting commences on the 1st of August, where the hens are strictly preserved, and where no spring shooting is allowed at all.

A full-grown Blackcock will measure about 22 inches in length, and sometimes weigh as much as four pounds. It is a very handsome bird, with its black and dark-brown plumes, variegated here and there with white, and shining with a steely-blue reflection. It has the crimson patch over the eye common to all the *tetraonidæ*, but possesses a peculiar mark of distinction in the tail, the four lateral feathers of which on each side are elongated and curved outwards, something like the flukes of an anchor, or, as some have thought, the form of a lyre—hence the name *Lyrarus tetrix* given to the bird by Swainson. The Grey Hen, as the female is generally called, is smaller in size, and without this peculiarity. Her plumage, although generally brown, wants the rich warm sienna tint of that of the Red Grouse; it is prettily mottled, and shaded with black and grey.

This species has been frequently known to interbreed with the pheasant, and on one or two occasions with the common barn-door fowl; sometimes with the capercalzie.

and the ptarmigan; and, but very rarely, with the moor-fowl, which, being a strictly monogamous bird, is not so likely as the other kinds of Grouse, all of which are polygamous, to produce hybrids. Mr. Yarrel, in his beautiful 'History of British Birds,' has figured several specimens of these cross breeds.



CAPERCALZIE.

Amid the pine wood's depth of shade
 Have ye watched the Capercallie,
 With shining purple plumes outspread,
 And bold bright eye, o'erarched with red,
 Bow condescendingly his head,
 With his sober mate to dally.

Let us now pass

O'er many a winding dale and painful steep,
 The abode of coveyed Grouse and timid sheep,

and, leaving far behind us the lowlands, where cultivation disputes with Nature for the possession of the land, let us climb into those regions where the latter reigns paramount; let us skirt the loch, explore the rocky glen, traverse the larch woods, and penetrate the depths of the gloomy pine forest, and look upon

The giant Grouse, where boastful he displays
 His breast of varying green, and crows and claps
 His glossy wings —

the great COCK-O'-THE-WOODS, *Tetraio Urogallus*, as naturalists call him, which name we may translate if we please into the Bull-cock—largest of all feathered game, largest indeed of all our native wild birds, weighing as much as a turkey, that is from twelve to fifteen pounds, and measuring about two feet nine inches in length. This is what Buffon calls *Le Grand Coq de Bruyère*. His commonest name is Capercaillie, or Capercalzie, from the Gaelic *capullicoille*, literally the 'Horse of the Wood.' North of Inverness they say *Caper-calze*, or *Auer-calze*, reminding us of the German and Dutch names for the bird, *Auerhan* and *Ouerhan*, both having reference to its large size; truly a splendid fellow, but not to be shot easily nor wantonly. Once upon a time he reigned king of these pine woods, as he still does in those of old Scandinavia. But he had many enemies, the most destructive of whom was man, and was hunted from place to place; and finally yielded possession of his ancient inheritance, the last of his race then inhabiting the British islands having been shot near Inverness in 1780. From the Irish bogs and forests he had retired some time previously, 1760 being the last recorded date of his appearance there.

The first attempt to reintroduce this noble bird into Britain was made about the beginning of 1828, by Lord Fife. This experiment, although not altogether successful, was sufficiently so to induce another Scottish nobleman, the Marquis of Breadalbane, to renew the attempt in 1838 and 1839; during which years he procured as many as fifty-four adult birds, of which two-thirds were females, from Norway. There is a curious and interesting journal extant, which was kept by Sir Fowell Buxton's Irish gamekeeper, who went to Sweden to take charge of the birds collected by Mr. Lloyd, author of 'The Field Sports of Norway and Sweden,' and bring them to Taymouth Castle, the seat of the noble marquis. The larch and pine woods about this mansion are now tenanted by the descendants of these imported Capercalzies. The hills of Drummond, Kenmore, and Croftmorraig are their especial places of resort. Several

of them are said to migrate every year down to Strath Tay, Blair Athol, Dunkeld, and the woods about Crieff. So that the noble enterprise of Lord Breadalbane has been crowned with deserved success, and the king of game birds is again restored to his hereditary dominions; and 'the right royal gunnery,' as 'Craven' terms it, is likely, ere long, to be enjoyed by the sportsman who visits the northern moors, and hills, and woods wherein pines stretch away on every side like stately columns; and the light-leaved larches whisper to the passing gales, that play with the tresses of the silver-rined birches, and set the lady-ferns dancing around the margin of the haunted well.

Did our readers ever, when

Admiring Nature in her wildest mood,

amid such scenes as these, observe this splendid bird, in his rich dress of black, brown, and grey, beautifully shaded, and tinged with a fine glossy golden green? Over each large, full, flashing eye is a distinct red arch; the short, stout, conical bill, characteristic of the Grouse family, is of a pale horn-colour; the legs, like those of all its congeners, are very thick and strong, and covered with brownish-grey feathers; the toes and claws are black. This is the plumage of the adult cock, which is not in perfection until the third year. The adult female has a brown beak, hazel irides; the head, neck, back, wings, and upper tail-coverts and feathers are dark brown, with yellowish freckles and bars; the front of the neck and breast are a pale chestnut, the feathers of the latter being margined with black, and edged with grey; on the flanks and under tail-coverts, this edging becomes broader and lighter; the legs, toes, and claws are all brown. Such is the queen of the woods. She is generally about twenty-six inches long. The royal scions of both sexes resemble her until after the first moult, when the young cocks begin to put on the male attire.

But, if you want to see the Cock-o'-the-woods in all his glory, you should visit him in the month of February, when the pine-tree boughs are yet bending beneath their load of snow. There he sits, high up, out of reach, with his neck outstretched, the feathers of his head erected like

a crest, his tail expanded, and his wings drooping to his feet, uttering his love-call, which resembles *Pelur, pelur, pelur!* interrupted every now and then with a deep *quck!* which sounds like a chuckle far down in the throat. It is answered, by the hens within hearing, with a cry like the croak of a raven, or rather thus: *Gock, gock, gock!* and for some weeks the woods are rife with these unmusical sounds; they then cease; the female commences preparing for her work of incubation; and the male skulks away, as if ashamed of himself, to hide in the leafy covert, and renew his plumage, which soon after begins to look dull and ragged. The two sexes consort not again until the next breeding season; on the hen devolves all the trouble of hatching and rearing the young. Her rude nest is placed on the ground, in some secluded situation; and there, on her eggs, from six to twelve in number, of a pale reddish brown, spotted over with two shades of deeper colour, she sits her appointed twenty-nine days, and leads forth her chicks—or poults we should call them, to be sportsmanlike—which run as soon as they are hatched, and feed on worms, ants, and other insects. The food of the old birds consists chiefly of the leaves and tender shoots of the Scotch fir, with juniper and other berries common in the northern forests: in the winter, they eat the buds of the birch, &c. Rarely or never, it is said, do they touch the spruce-fir.

Of Capercalzie-shooting the British sportsman knows but little yet, although he may be better informed by-and-by, when the birds get sufficiently numerous to allow of their being shot in a fair manner. One of the modes by which they are taken in Sweden must be characterised as anything but fair: we should call it poaching. Having marked the places of retirement to roost, the destroyers go by torch-light, and shoot the birds at their leisure, as they sit stupidly staring at the fire blazing beneath them. On account of their size, weight, and heavy flight, we should imagine that they would be at all times an easy prey; and as their value in the market, being from ten to fifteen shillings, renders them a good prize, they will no doubt, unless carefully watched and preserved, again become scarce in the country, and eventually die out, as they have done before.

But have ye clomb the Alpine height
 'Mid rock and snow-drift, seeking
 The Ptarmigan with plumage white,
 That crouches, hidden from the sight,
 Where scarce a sound by day or night
 Upon the ear is breaking?

We must now leave the pine-woods of Strathmuir and the bonny birken shaws of Blair Athol and Dunkeld, to climb high up amid the realms of barren rock and everlasting snow. There we shall find THE PTARMIGAN,

Sitting in his home sublime,
 High o'er cloudland's boundless sea.



PTARMIGAN.

This is the *Lagopus Vulgaris* of Flemming and some naturalists, the *Tetrao Lagopus* of others. Selby and Gould call it *L. Mutus*, from the remarkable change which takes place in the colour of the plumage, in accordance with the variation of the seasons. 'In summer,' as Mr. Knox tells us in his admirable book on 'Game Birds and Wild Fowl,' 'it presents a mixture of black, yellow, white, and grey, exactly resembling the colour of the mossy, lichen-covered rocks and stones where it lies concealed, and which, becoming gradually whiter as the season advances, at last nearly assimilates itself to the snows of winter.' Thus the bird is often enabled to elude the pursuit of its natural

enemies, as well as of man. The generic term *Lagopus*, applied to this and the Red Grouse, comes from the Greek, and signifies 'hare-foot,' these two species having their feet entirely covered with a thick, short plumage, like fur. This the Black Grouse and Capercalzie have not, their feathers only extending to the first joint of the tarsi. This obvious distinction has caused Macgillivray to place the brown and grey Ptarmigans, as the two species are often called, in a genus by themselves. The term Ptarmigan, we may observe, is but a slight modification of the Gaelic name *Tarmachan*. The snow-covered peaks and bare rocks, far above the heathery region inhabited by its near relative, the Red Grouse, are the principal haunts of this bird; and he must be an ardent and a hardy sportsman who endures the toils and overcomes the difficulties of penetrating those Alpine solitudes, where scarcely another living creature is to be seen, except the mighty eagle, whose scream alone breaks the awful silence, or the grey hare, whose furry mantle undergoes a seasonable change of colour analogous to that of the plumage of the bird. Such, then, is the Ptarmigan, once, as Pennant asserts, a dweller amid the hills of Cumberland and Westmorland, and some other parts of England, but now not to be found at all south of the Grampians. The further north you go among the Highlands, the more plentiful does it become. It does not exist in Ireland; and, although once known in Wales, has not been seen there for at least half a century. It inhabits most Alpine regions of both the European and American continents, feeding on the tops of such plants as are to be found in those wild and desolate situations, and probably also on insects. As a table-bird, it is much inferior to the moorfowl, like which it is monogamous, and, to a certain extent, gregarious. 'The packs,' as Morris tells us, in the work to which we have several times referred, 'break up early in the spring, when pairing takes place; and the couples distribute themselves in situations suitable for their purpose.'

Macgillivray describes the cry of the bird as similar to the croak of a frog; others have compared it to the harsh note of the missel thrush. The hen makes a very rude kind

of nest, of a few twigs, coarse grass, or sedge : it is not easily found, being placed under some large stone, or stunted bush, or tuft of mountain herbage. The eggs are yellowish or greenish white, blotched and spotted with dark brown : they vary in number from eight to fourteen. The young run about as soon as they are hatched, and evince great sagacity in the selection of hiding-places.

The Ptarmigan has never been known to breed in confinement : it pines for the freedom of the hills, and soon dies if subject to restraint. It is the smallest of our native grouse ; and with us, except the Capercalzie, the least plentiful. That it is, however, very abundant in Norway and Sweden, we may judge from the fact that a salesman in Leadenhall Market has received as many as 15,000 at one consignment from those countries. The usual price of the bird, in the market of Drammen, is 4d. : here it fetches 2s.

There is a bird called the Rock Ptarmigan (by naturalists, *Rupestris*), which it seems likely is identical with the common species, in one of its varieties of costume ; and this brings us to the end of the Grouse family. Our readers, we imagine, will think the space well occupied if we conclude this chapter with some stanzas from a fine poem by ' Delta,' of *Blackwood's Magazine* :—

TO A WOUNDED PTARMIGAN.

Haunter of the herbless peak,
 Habitant 'twixt earth and sky,
 Snow-white bird, of bloodless beak,
 Rushing wing, and rapid eye,
 Hath the fowler's fatal aim
 Of thy freeborn rights bereft thee,
 And, 'mid natures curbed or tame
 Thus encaged, a captive left thee ?
 Thou who, earth's low valleys scorning,
 From thy cloud-embattled nest
 Wont to catch the earliest morning
 Sunbeam on thy breast !

Where did first the light of day
 See thee bursting from thy shell ?
 Was it where Ben Nevis grey
 Towers aloft o'er flood and fell ?

Or where down upon the storm
 Plaided shepherds gaze in wonder
 Round thy rocky sides, Cairngorm!
 Rolling with its clouds and thunder?
 Or, with summit heaven-directed,
 Where Benvoirlich views, in pride,
 All his skiey groves reflected
 In Loch Ketturin's tide?

Boots it not; but this we know —
 What a wild, free life was thine,
 Whether on the peak of snow
 Or amid the clumps of pine;
 Now on high, begirt with heath;
 Now decoyed by cloudless weather
 To the golden broom beneath,
 Happy with thy mates together.
 Yours were every cliff and cranny
 Of your birth's majestic hill,
 Tameless flock! and ye were many,
 Ere the spoiler came to kill.

Did the Genius of the place,
 Which of living things, but you,
 Had for long beheld no trace,
 That unhallowed visit rue?
 Did the gathered snow of years
 Which begirt that mountain's forehead,
 Thawing, melt as 'twere in tears
 O'er that natural outrage horrid?
 Did the lady-fern hang drooping,
 And the quivering pine-trees sigh,
 As, to cheer his game-dogs whooping,
 Passed the spoiler by?

None may know; the dream is o'er;
 Bliss and beauty cannot last.
 To that haunt, for evermore,
 Ye are creatures of the past;
 And for you it mourns in vain,
 While the dirgeful night-breeze only
 Sings, and falls the fitful rain,
 'Mid your homes forlorn and lonely.
 Ye have passed; the bonds enthrall you
 Of supine and wakeless death;
 Never more shall spring recall you
 To the scented heath.

CHAPTER V.

WATER BIRDS.—CRANES AND BUSTARDS:—THE COMMON CRANE, GREAT AND LITTLE BUSTARDS, COURSER, AND PRATINCOLE.

BIRDS have by many naturalists been primarily arranged in two series, terrestrial and aquatic, and the latter, says Macgillivray, who, both in his 'Manual' and more extended 'History of British Birds,' adopts this arrangement, may in like manner be divided into two groups, *grallatorial* or long-legged birds, addicted to wading, and *natatorial*, or birds that habitually swim. But among the waders there are many that seldom, and some that never, enter the water; and among the swimmers some that procure their food on land. Birds cannot, therefore, be strictly arranged according to their manner of walking or flying, any more than according to their food; but all these circumstances, and others taken in connexion with their organization, lead to the formation of orders and families, which are in themselves more or less natural, that is, contain a series of species obviously connected with each other more than with other species. Our readers will, therefore, not be surprised to find that we have included under the head of Water-birds some kinds whose habits do not appear to justify such an arrangement, all of which, however, may fitly be called either Waders or Swimmers, being long-legged birds, or, if short, those which seek their food and pass much of their time in the water.

In this great primary division, then, we include all the British species, whether indigenous or migratory, which have not already been described in the previous volumes, or under the head of Game Birds, with which this volume

is commenced, except the *Columbidæ*, or Doves, to which a chapter is specially devoted at the conclusion of the volume.

The Cranes and Bustards represent in this country, with two other species presently to be noticed, the *Cursores*, or Runners, some of them being not at all common with us. They all feed on insects and worms, with occasional vegetable substances, and nestle on the ground, laying from three to five eggs. The males are larger than the females, with plumage sometimes differently coloured. Many of the species are migratory, those which in the summer reside in the cold or temperate region, moving southward in autumn.



CRANE.

THE GREY or COMMON CRANE, called by Linnæus *Ardea Grus*, by Macgillivray *Grus Cinerea*, is the only one of the Crane family which visits Britain, where it is of rare occurrence, not so many as a dozen individuals having been killed here within the last forty years, although the bird is said formerly to have bred in the fenny districts. The prevailing colour of the plumage is ash grey; the crown of the head is bare and red, and there is a band of dull white from each eye down the side of the neck. A specimen of 'this occa-

sional and very rare visitor,' as Yarrell calls it, was taken in Aberdeenshire a few years ago; it was first observed about the end of May, in a field about eight miles up the river Dee, where it remained several days before it was shot; it was a young male. On the Continent, the Cranes generally arrive in flocks about the end of spring; in their migrations they fly high, being arranged in lines or triangles. In the temperate regions they merely alight to feed and rest for a short time, proceeding to the more northern regions to breed. They nestle in marshy places, laying two eggs of a greenish grey colour, with brown spots. These birds are remarkably swift runners, but rise on the wing with difficulty.

In Richardson's 'Travels in the Arctic Regions,' we have a graphic picture of the Crane's method of flight:—

The migration of birds has long excited the serious attention of ornithologists. 'The Crane and the Swallow observe the time of their coming.' (Jer. viii. 7.) The migration and periodical flight of birds, instinctive as they must certainly be considered, are yet peculiarly demonstrative of the providential superintendence of the Creator. The natural history of the Crane furnishes striking evidence of this assertion. Immediately after landing, we were surprised and delighted with a flight of birds, which we discerned at first like a thick dark speck in the heavens, which gradually enlarged as it approached, and discovered at length the array and order of their flight. They wheeled along their airy movements in the form of a semi-circle, enclosing within itself numbers of smaller circles; the component parts of which were constantly shifting their relative positions, advancing to the front as if by a sudden impulse, then falling back to the rear, alternately occupying and giving place to others. The lively competition was constantly maintained; each of them every instant passing or passed by his fellow. All was grace and harmony, not one discordant movement throughout the whole array; everything appeared as if regulated by a preconcerted plan, in which every member understood and performed his part with freedom and precision, alike the subordinates and the superiors. They were too high in the air for us to hear any noise from the steerage of their wings, or to know what species of birds they were; but we judged them to be Cranes. They held on their steady flight from north to south, following the course of the river as far as the eye could accompany them.

Gould says that 'flocks of these birds are seen at stated times in France and Germany, passing northwards and

southwards, as the seasons may be, in marshalled order, high in the air, their sonorous voices distinctly heard even from their elevated course; occasionally they descend, attracted by newly sown fields, or the prospect of finding food in marshes, on the borders of rivers, or even the shores of the sea; but generally they continue their flight unchecked towards their distant resting place.'

Kolben observes that these birds are often seen in large flocks in the marshes about the Cape of Good Hope. He never saw a flock of them on the ground that had not some birds placed, apparently as sentinels, to keep a look out, while the others are feeding. These sentinels stand on one leg, and at intervals stretch out their necks, as if to observe that all is safe. On any notice of danger, the whole flock are instantly on the wing. Thus far we can believe the narrator, for it is no unusual thing for birds, as well as other animals, to set a watch to give the alarm should any danger approach while they are feeding; but when he asserts that, in the night time, each of the watch-Cranes, as they rest on their left legs, hold a stone of considerable weight in the right claw, in order that if they fall asleep the dropping of the stone may awake them, we are incredulous; this is too like a traveller's story.

The Crane, it seems, is a courageous bird, if what is related in 'The Akbar,' a newspaper of Algiers, be true, which we may well believe it is:—

A number of Cranes, some days ago, alighted on the road from Orleansville to Tenes, near a spot where some soldiers were at work, and presently a large Eagle, swooping down on them, attempted to seize one; but the Cranes defended and rescued their unfortunate companion. The Eagle then tried to seize another, but all the Cranes defended themselves vigorously, and a regular battle ensued. After it had raged for some time the Ravens arrived, and took the part of the Cranes. The combat then continued with renewed fury, and there is no saying what would have been the result, if a soldier had not dispersed the combatants by killing one of the Cranes with his sword. The fury of the conflict may be judged of from the fact that the soldier was able to get close to the Cranes without being noticed. Although, however, when the conflict was put an end to, the Eagle seized one of the Cranes, and bore it off in triumph.

Like the Stork, the Crane, in Eastern countries, is said to build not only in inhabited places, but on the tops of

houses, although more generally, when it did build in this country, it chose the solitary waste and marsh land for a resting place. There is an old English statute for preserving its eggs, and its flesh appears to have been highly valued as a table delicacy: 'it is,' says Willoughby, 'very savoury and well tasted, not to say delicate.' That it fetched a good price in the market we may learn from 'The Northumberland Household Book,' where it is put down at sixteen pence. Among the items of a sumptuous repast given at the enthronisation of Archbishop Newell, we find 204 Cranes.

Pegg says, in his 'Form of Curry,' that 'William the Conqueror was remarkable for an immense paunch, and withal was so exact, so nice and curious in his repasts, that when his prime favourite, William Fitz Osborne, who as dupifer, or steward of the household, had the charge of his curry, served him with the flesh of a Crane scarcely half roasted, the king was so highly exasperated that he lifted up his foot, and would have struck him, had not Eudo, who was appointed dupifer immediately after, warded off the blow.'

Like the feathers of the Ostrich, those of the Crane, which are long and drooping, are valuable as plumes.

The Crane is frequently mentioned by the ancient poets; the prophet Jeremiah alludes to it, as we have seen in the extract from Richardson; and it occupies a sort of heroic place in the classic legend of Ibycus, who was a poet of Rhegium about 540 years before Christ. He was murdered by robbers, and at the moment of death implored the assistance of some Cranes which were flying over his head. A while after, as the murderers were in the market-place, they observed some of these birds in the air, and one said to his companion, 'there are the birds that know of the death of Ibycus.' He was overheard, the assassins were seized, and tortured until they confessed their guilt. Schiller has written a fine poem on the subject.

BUSTARDS.

The *Otine* birds, or Bustards, constitute a family of the Runners, said to be intermediate between the Partridges

and Plovers; they differ considerably in size, some being very large and others small. But two species of this group are known as British birds, and they, although formerly not uncommon, have now become extremely rare. These



GREAT BUSTARD.

are THE GREAT and LITTLE BUSTARDS (*Otis Tarda* and *Otis Tetrax*). Although furnished with large wings, these birds on ordinary occasions make but little use of them, yet when they do rise their flight is strong and sustained. They run with great speed, crouch on the ground to avoid their enemies, feed on vegetable substances, worms, and insects, form a slight and rude nest among the herbage—a mere cavity, and lay from two to five, or more, spotted eggs.

Once upon a time, as the nursery tale begins, before scientific farming was thought of, and when England possessed wide tracts of open plain, and high breezy downs, untunnelled and unscarred by the railway cutting, the Great Bustard stalked in undisturbed security, a noble bird, in shape something like a goose, but with much longer legs and neck, and altogether a less heavy anserine appearance; in weight about twenty pounds, in length two feet six or eight inches. Something like a shot that! Not easily brought down, for the bird is quick of sight and quick of hearing, and the open situation which it frequents enables it to discover an enemy afar off.

In the Bustard genus we have the only European representatives of the *Struthionidæ*, or Ostrich family, and the species known to us resemble, in their habits and appearance, those feathered giants of the stony karroos of South Africa and burning deserts of Arabia, and seemingly boundless plains of America, where the Cassowary, Emu and Ostrich stalk amid the trackless waste, and subsist upon the dry herbage which grows here and there in scanty tufts, or springs up more thickly around the brackish pool, or frequently empty water-course.

The brown karoo where the bleating cry
Of the Springbok's fawn sounds plaintively,
And the timorous Quagga's shrill whistling neigh,
Is heard by the fountain at twilight grey.
Where the Zebra wantonly tosses his mane
With wild hoof scouring the desolate plain;
And the fleet-footed Ostrich over the waste
Speeds like a horseman who travels in haste,
Hieing away to the home of her rest
Where she and her mate have scoop'd their nest,
Far hid from the pitiless plunderer's view
In the pathless depths of the parched karoo.

Such is the description which Pringle gives of one of the homes and haunts of the Camel-bird of the Arabs—the largest of the feathered game of the Hottentots and wild Bushmen, and swarthy sons of the eastern deserts, who hunt it chiefly for its light silky plumes, which are so much valued as ornaments in highly civilised communities. And this is the near relative of our almost extinct Bustards, with the Mooruk of New Britain lately brought to this country, and that strange bird the wingless Apterix, called by the natives of New Zealand *Kiwi*, and of a creature stranger yet in outer conformation, the extinct Dodo of New Holland. The Emu and the Cassowary we have already mentioned, and it now only requires the Nandu of South America, and the Patagonian Rheu to complete the family group.

Stay: there is yet one more member to be introduced, THE RUFFED OR MACQUEEN BUSTARD (*Otis Macqueenii*), of which but a single specimen is recorded to have been shot in Britain. A figure of it is given in the 'Naturalist,'

No. XV., dated May, 1852. It is a handsome bird, in length about twenty-three inches, in weight thirty-six ounces. Of about the same size, and not much like it in appearance, is the Little Bustard, whose rare visits to these islands are generally made in the autumn and winter months; its flesh is said to be superior to that of any of our game birds; its habits appear to resemble those of the Great Bustard, frequenting the open champaign country, avoiding mountains and woods, and sheltering itself from observation in fields of grain or other green crops. Its cry resembles the syllables *proot proot*, chiefly uttered in the night. The Great Bustard is said to *coo* like a pigeon. This latter bird, although once generally distributed over the English counties, is now almost extinct; the last recorded specimen that was shot was in Devonshire, on the 31st of December, 1851. From Ireland Mr. Thomson states it has disappeared long since. Yarrell mentions a pair of these birds as having been sold in London in 1817 or 1818, for the table, at the high price of twelve guineas—an expensive luxury!

There are two other birds included by Macgillivray in his order of Runners, both of which are rare visitants with us; these are THE CREAM-COLOURED COURSER (*Cursorius Europæus*) and THE COLLARED PRATINCOLE (*Glareola Pratincola*). The first is a native of Africa, and of this but six specimens have been taken here, the latest recorded having been shot in the Hackney Marshes in November, 1858. It is a bird of slender make, with long legs, and of small size, the length of the body, including the tail, being but ten inches; the general colour of the plumage is light yellowish brown, approaching to crimson colour. The Pratincole is also about ten inches long, and in shape not unlike a swallow; it has moderately long and slender legs: on which it traverses the marshy districts in search of flies and other winged insects which live among the reeds and rushes. About six specimens have been taken in England and Ireland.

CHAPTER VI.

PROBERS: — THE GREAT, GOLDEN, DOTTEREL, AND RING
 PLOVERS — LAPWING — TURNSTONE — OYSTER CATCHER.

THE *Tentatores*, or Probers, are an order of birds which frequent the borders of lakes and rivers, marshy grounds, and the shores of the sea, feeding chiefly on worms, small shell fish, and insects, which they procure by thrusting their bills into the soft mud or sand; they run with great swiftness, often following the returning waves far out, and retreating before them when they roll in again, thus keeping in a constant state of activity. They have a rapid flight, which can be long sustained; when alarmed some of them run a short way, and then take to wing, but some will lie close to the ground, and so strive to escape detection. They are mostly birds of moderate size, some being as large as the pheasant, and some as small as the lark; their legs are generally long and slender, well adapted for wading, and they have loud, shrill, and generally reiterated cries, to which they give utterance when alarmed or excited in any way. The larger birds are extremely shy and vigilant, but the smaller will often allow a near approach, when intent on searching for food.

PLOVERS.

THE GREAT PLOVER, sometimes called the Thick-kneed Bustard, or Stone Curlew, appears to form a connecting link between the Bustards and true Plovers; its scientific name is *Edicnemus Crepitans*, having reference to the thick, or swelled appearance of the legs about the knee joints, and to the harsh croaking note of the bird, which is migratory with us—arriving in the spring, and leaving again in the autumn. It is very generally distributed

throughout the English counties, in some of the most southerly and sheltered of which it may occasionally be found throughout the year. The plumage of this species is on the upper parts light yellowish red, tinged with grey, and streaked with blackish brown; the under parts are light yellowish red and white, with dusky streaks. The length of the body, with the tail, is about seventeen and a-half inches; it frequents waste lands, commons, and large cultivated fields, and lays its two or three yellowish grey, or brown spotted eggs, in a slight hollow in the bare ground, or turf, or amid gravel or pebbles, with the colour of which the eggs closely assimilate. Having been found most plentifully in that county, this bird is sometimes called the Norfolk Plover; it is remarkable for its prominent eye, which is encircled with a bright yellow ring. White, in his 'Natural History of Selborne' thus records:—'On the 27th of February, 1788, Stone Curlews were heard to pipe; and on March 1st, after it was dark, some were passing over the village, as might be perceived by their quick short note, which they use in their nocturnal excursions by way of watchword, that they may not stray and lose their companions. Thus we see that, retire whithersoever they may in the winter, they return again in the spring, and are, as it now appears, the first summer birds which come back. Perhaps the mildness of the season may have quickened the immigration of the Curlews this year.' These birds are seldom seen after the beginning of October. Early in the year we have not unfrequently heard the cry above alluded to from our home near the river Medway, in Kent, but it was not a quick short note, but a long-drawn plaintive one, sounding inexpressibly sad and mournful amid the gloom and silence of evening; it seemed to come from many quarters at once, like the wailing of lost spirits, and was probably uttered by the birds while resting in the marshes.

The following account of the habits of this bird, as observed in France, is furnished by Valmont Bomare:—

The Great Plover, commonly called the Land Curlew, is the bird that is heard in the country in the evening in summer and the beginning of autumn, and which seems incessantly to repeat the word

courlie or rather *tarlui*, beginning its cries at sunset, and continuing them all night. This large Plover is of the size of a chicken that has attained half its growth, and measures sixteen inches in length, twenty-six inches and a half in extent of wings. The Land Curlews arrive pretty early in the spring; they settle on the dry grounds, filled with stones among fallows and stubbles, preferring low hills and sloping fields. Crickets, grasshoppers, and other insects form part of their food. During the day these birds keep themselves concealed and crouched on the ground; but at sunset they put themselves in action, and are heard to commence their cries, which they do not cease to repeat during the summer nights. When surprised they run with extreme speed; their flight is low, and not very long; they are very wild birds, not easily made up to. The female lays two or, at most, three eggs, in the midst of pebbles or gravel, in some depression of the ground, or in a hollow which these birds have formed by scraping. It is said they sometimes have two broods in the year, that incubation continues for a month, and that the growth of the feathers is slow in the young. In fact they are nearly full grown before they can fly, their wing feathers not having yet sprouted; but they can run in this state with great lightness, and at this age appear as stupid as timid. In November the Land Curlews set out on their journey to warmer climates, and it appears that even in summer they do not advance far northward. As an article of food, their flesh is held in moderate estimation.



GOLDEN PLOVER.

THE GOLDEN PLOVER, sometimes called the Yellow, or Whistling Plover, whose scientific name is *Pluvialis Aurea*, or, according to Linnæus, *Charadrius Pluvialis*, is one of the

most beautiful, and perhaps the best known species of its family. The plumage is soft, with the tints nicely blended, being in the upper parts brownish black, variegated with numerous yellow spots, arranged along the margins of the feathers; the sides of the head, neck, breast, and sides of the body, are light grey, spotted and streaked with brownish grey; the throat and abdomen are white. Macgillivray has drawn such a beautiful and graphic picture of the Golden Plover in its moorland home, that we are tempted to transfer it to our pages:—

‘Many a time and oft, in the days of my youth, when the cares of life were few, and spirits expansive; and often, too, in later years, when I have made a temporary escape to the wilderness to breathe an atmosphere untainted by the effluvia of cities, and ponder in silence on the wonders of creative power, have I stood on the high moor, and listened to the welcome notes of the Plover, that seemed to come from the grey slopes of the neighbouring hills. Except the soft note of the Ring Plover, I know none so pleasing from the Grallatorial tribes. Amid the wild scenery of the rugged hills and sedgy valleys it comes gently and soothingly on the ear, and you feel, without being altogether conscious of its power, that it soothes the troubled mind as water cools the burning brow. The clear gentle tones of the Celtic maiden could not be more pleasant to anyone than the summer note of the Golden Plover to the lover of birds and of nature. As you listen to it, now distant, now nearer, and near, and see the birds with short flights approaching as if to greet you, though in reality with more fear than confidence, with anxiety and apprehension, the bright sunshine that glances on their pretty breasts is faintly obscured by the white vapours that have crept up from the western valley, and presently all around is suffused with an opaline light, into the confines of which a bird is seen dimly to advance, then another, and a third. Who could represent the scene on canvas?—a hollow hemisphere of white shining mist, on which are depicted two dark human figures, their heads surrounded with a radiant halo, and three black-breasted Golden Plovers, magnified to twice their natural

size, and gazing upon us each from its mossy tuft. It is as if two mortals had a conference on the heath with three celestial messengers; and so they have. Presently a breeze rolls away the mist, and discloses a number of these watchful sentinels, each on its mound of faded moss, and all emitting their mellow cries the moment we offer to advance. They are males, whose mates are brooding over their eggs, or leading their down-clad and toddling chicks among the, to them, pleasant peat-bogs that intervene between the high banks clad with luxuriant heath, not yet recovered from the effects of the winter frosts, and little meadows of cotton grass, white as the snow-wreaths that lie on the distant hills. How prettily they run over the grey moss and lichens, their little feet twinkling, and their full bright and soft eyes gleaming, as they commence their attempts to entice us away from their chosen retreats.'

All the Plovers and allied species display great anxiety, and resort to pretty stratagems, to protect their young; when aware of the approach of an intruder, the female crouches down as long as possible to avoid detection; and when she is discovered, runs some distance before she takes wing, lest, rising directly from the nest, she should direct a foe to the spot. Sometimes, when a dog is approaching, she rises with plaintive cries, and seems to fly with difficulty, as though wounded and likely to be easily caught; thus the enemy is lured on in pursuit, until sufficiently far away to render the discovery of her young unlikely; she then throws off the mask, and urges a bolder and stronger flight, still, however, keeping within an easy distance of the nest, and watching over it with tender solicitude. Charlotte Smith, in her poem on Beachy Head, alludes to this well-known habit of the bird:—

And often from her nest among the swamps
Where the gemmed sundew grows, or fringed buckbean,
They scare the Plover that with plaintive cries
Flutters as sorely wounded down the wind.

Yet, although a wary and cautious bird, the Plover may frequently be enticed very near to the fowler by an imitation

of its plaintive monotonous whistle—that cry to which Thomson alludes in his opening lines on Spring:—

Or from the shore
The Plovers whir, to scatter on the heath
And sing their wild notes to the listening waste.

Warton, describing the natural indications of the first of April, says —

From the grey moor on feeble wing
The screaming Plovers idly spring.

And sometimes the cry of this bird is, in truth, like a shrill scream, harsh and discordant; but more commonly it is soft and plaintive. Burns speaks of—

The deep-toned Plover grey, wild whistling on the hill,

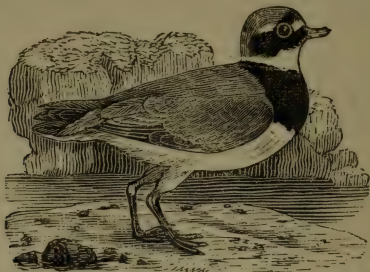


GREY PLOVER.

THE GREY PLOVER, sometimes called the Black-bellied Plover, the Grey Sandpiper, and the Bull-head, is the *Tringa Squatarola* of Linnæus, and the *Pluvialis Squatarola* of Macgillivray and others. It is larger than the Golden Plover, and has a stouter bill; but it is similarly formed, and has plumage of much the same tints and markings, and undergoing too the same seasonal changes. With us this is a somewhat rare species, visiting our coasts in Autumn and Spring in small flocks; it keeps pretty

close to the muddy and sandy beaches, hunting for worms, insects, and small marine creatures, as others of the Plover family do. Some individuals have been known to remain all the winter with us; but no instance is recorded of its having bred here, hence British naturalists can say but little of its habits from personal observation. It is known as a resident, or occasional visitant, in most countries, both of the old and new world; and no one has described its habits so well as Audubon, who traces it from the Gulf of Mexico to Labrador, and states that in winter most of the migratory individuals pass northward beyond the limits of the United States, but that some spend the summer months in the mountainous parts of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut, where they breed. 'The nest,' he says, 'is merely a slight hollow, with a few blades of grass. The eggs are four in number; their ground colour yellowish white, tinged with olivaceous, and generally covered with blotches and clots of light brown and purple. On being started they use all the artifices employed on such occasions to induce the intruder to set out in pursuit. The young leave the nest almost immediately after they are hatched, and when two or three weeks old run with great activity, and squat in perfect silence when apprehensive of danger. When they are able to fly, several families unite, and betake themselves to the seashore, where other flocks gradually arrive, until at length, on the approach of cold weather, almost all of them begin to move southward. In their habits these birds are more maritime than the Golden Plovers, which, when migrating, generally advance over the land. The flight of this bird is swift, strong, and well sustained. When roaming over large sand-bars, they move in compact bodies, whirling round, and suddenly veering so as alternately to exhibit their upper and under parts. At this time old and young are intermixed, and many of the former have lost the black, so conspicuous on the neck and breast in summer. During winter, or as long as they frequent the seashore, they feed on marine insects, worms, and small shell-fish, and when they are in the interior, on grasshoppers and other insects, as well as berries of various

kinds, on which they fatten so as to become tolerably good eating. This species is known in Pennsylvania by the name of the Whistling Field Plover, suggested by the loud and modulated cries which it emits.'



DOTTEREL PLOVER.

THE DOTTEREL PLOVER (*Charadrius*, or *Pluvialis Morinellus*).—The Dotterel, as this bird is commonly called, is considerably smaller than the Golden Plover, which it closely resembles in shape; it has a somewhat longer and more rounded tail; it has more of red and less of yellow in its plumage, whose prevailing tints are reddish brown and grey, with a pleasing intermixture of white. This bird is a periodical visitant with us, making its appearance in flocks in April and May, when it migrates northward, and again in September and October, when it returns to its winter haunts. Some individuals remain to breed in Britain, choosing especially the mountainous districts of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and parts of the Grampian range. They make no nest, but deposit their eggs, three or four in number, in any convenient cavity, generally in a dry place, and sheltered by a stone or fragment of rock. After breeding they betake themselves to the lower parts of the country, and are always found several together. They are easily shot, remaining quiet until the fowler has approached very near, and then running from him with outstretched wings, without attempting to fly. This

apparent stupidity has gained for them their common name, Dotterel—a foolish bird. Johnson says that the word comes from *Dote*, and signifies a bird that assumes gestures, quoting a passage from Bacon to illustrate this meaning:—‘We see how ready asses and monkeys are to imitate the motions of men, and in catching of Dotterels we see how the foolish brood playeth the ape in gestures.’ The old dramatists allude to this habit of the bird, and make its name synonymous with that of a fool; thus, Ben Jonson makes one of his characters say—

We have another leg strained for this Dottrel,

and hence Fitz-dottrel is the name given to the person alluded to, because he falls so entirely into the snares that are laid for him; and, again, in Beaumont and Fletcher’s ‘Scornful Lady,’ we find—

LADY.—I thank you, fine fool, for your most fine plot:
This was a subtle one, a stiff device
To have caught Dottrels with.

These birds are sometimes called *Morinelli*, which signifies, like their more common appellative, little fools: it has been said that by stupidly looking on and imitating the actions of the fowler, they have suffered themselves to be drawn into the net. T. C. Heysham, Esq., who seems to have closely observed their habits, says:—‘On the 3rd of July, we found three or four flocks near the short elevated part of this mountain (Robinson, in the Vicinity of Buttermere), and on all our visits, whether early in the morning or late in the afternoon, the greater part were always seen near the same place, sitting on the ground. When first discovered they permitted us to approach within a short distance without showing any symptoms of alarm, and frequently afterwards, when within a few paces, watching their movements, some would move slowly about, and pick up an insect, others would remain motionless, now and then stretching out their wings; and a few would occasionally toy with each other, at the same time emitting a few low notes, which had some resemblance to those of the common Linnet. In short, they appeared to be so very indifferent with regard to our presence, that, at last, my

assistant could not avoid exclaiming — “What stupid birds these are!” The female that had young, nevertheless, evinced considerable anxiety for their safety, whenever we came near the place where they were concealed; and as long as we remained in the vicinity, constantly flew to and fro above us, uttering her note of alarm.’

RING, OR SAND PLOVERS.

These birds constitute a genus of the Pluvialine family, to which has been applied the name *Charadrius*, which formerly stood for the whole of the Plover group. Many species are included in this genus, but three only are known as British birds; these are, THE RINGED SAND PLOVER



RING PLOVER.

(*Charadrius Hiaticula*), variously called the Ring or Stone Plover, Stone Hutch, Ring Dotterel, Sand Lark, Sandy Laverock, or Loo, and Dulwilly; THE KENTISH SAND PLOVER (*C. Cantianus*); and THE LITTLE RING PLOVER (*C. minor*), sometimes called the Little Ring Dotterel. These birds are all distinguished by a white ring round the throat, relieved by a band of brownish black; the first species is about eight inches in length, the second seven, and the third six and a-half. They have all, too, white and black bands

across the forehead, and in the general colours of their plumage are so much alike, as well as in their habits and manners, that the common observer would fail to distinguish one from another. The first species is common, and resident in Britain; the second occurs, but rarely, on the shores of the western and eastern counties of England; and the third, although not uncommon on the Continent, is with us an extremely rare bird, the capture of a single individual only being on record; that was killed at Shoreham, in Sussex, and from its extreme youth must have been bred here. Like its congeners, it is an elegant little bird, but being so rare, need not further occupy our attention. Speaking of the Ring Plovers generally, Macgillivray says, that they have the body, and especially the wings and tail, more elongated than the Plovers, the neck shorter, and the head proportionably larger. White and grey, or brown, in masses, are their predominant colours. Their lower parts do not become black in spring and summer, as is the case with the Plovers, nor is their plumage ever spotted or striped like theirs. They frequent chiefly the sandy shores of the sea, lakes, and rivers. Their nests are slight hollows in the sand, sometimes with a few vegetable substances, and their eggs are four, extremely large, light coloured, and clotted or clouded with dusky tints. The young, covered with down, run presently after birth, and conceal themselves by squatting. All the species are very active and lively, run with great celerity, have a very rapid flight, and emit a clear mellow cry. Their food consists of insects, crustacea, mollusca, and worms.

Such, then, are the pretty and lively little Ring Plovers, haunters of the sandy shore, where we may see their white breasts gleaming in the sunshine, as they run nimbly about, now following the retiring wave, to pick up the marine worms, and other small creatures, which lie exposed upon the sand, or can be found by thrusting the bill into it; now retreating before the returning flow, or rising on the wing, and gliding along at but a small height above wave or shore, frequently performing some graceful evolutions before alighting. Sometimes one is quite dazzled by a sudden flash, caused by a flock of these birds, all turning

their white breasts and under parts of their bodies to the sun, and then, as simultaneously, as though at a word of command, inclining them in an opposite direction. When the tide is high, they generally repose on the sands, or the near-at-hand pastures, where they crouch closely down, and are not likely to be noticed. When the nights are calm, and the moonlight silvers the waves, the clear mellow whistle of the Ring Plovers may be heard all along the shore, as they are then abroad hunting for food. Mr. Salmon, speaking of the migratory birds of the neighbourhood of Thetford, in Norfolk, says of the common Ring Plover, that 'it is very abundant upon all our warrens during the breeding season, and is the first bird that gives us notice of its arrival in the spring by its low plaintive whistle, whilst on the wing, and garrulous note of satisfaction, when it alights upon the ground. Their notes are peculiarly pleasing at this early season of the year upon our warrens, where hitherto silence has reigned for several months, only interrupted by the occasional whistle of a flock of Golden Plovers, as they sweep past you; but as the season advances, its notes are too melancholy for the freshness of spring. It commences its nidification very early, as I have found them sitting upon their eggs on the 30th March. After having reared their offspring, they all take their departure, by the middle of August, for the seashore, where they remain throughout the winter.'

Macgillivray says, that no birds manifest more anxiety about their eggs and young than these. 'They often come up to within a few yards of a person sauntering in their vicinity, feign lameness, and run limpingly along for some distance. If this does not suffice to entice the intruder, they droop one of their wings, as if it had been broken or dislocated, and shuffle away some yards farther. Then, perhaps, both wings seem broken, and the bird tumbles about in the most surprising manner. If you now run up, it remains in the agonies of death until you are within a few yards, when suddenly recovering, it starts upon its feet, emits a lively note, runs a little way, springs into the air, and is off at full speed, wheeling from side to side, and joyously whistling as it proceeds. It now makes a wide

circuit, and comes up in your rear, but remains motionless until you pass on. In its attempts to decoy persons from its nest, I have sometimes seen it fly off at once a distance of one hundred yards or more, spread out its wings and tail, and tremble as if in a fit of epilepsy.' So instinct teaches the birds to provide for the safety of their young.

Holy Nature, thou dost ever
 Watchful guard thy helpless brood,
 Taught by thee the wild-winged Plover
 Brings its young their evening food.

We know not to which of the foregoing species of the Plover genus Graham refers in the following lines from his 'Birds of Scotland;' they make that denizen of the wilderness a bird of mournful associations:—

While thus the Heathfowl covey day by day
 Is lessened, till, perhaps, one drooping bird
 Survives — the Plover, safe, her airy screams
 Circling repeats, then to a distance flies,
 And, querulous, still returns, importunate;
 Yet still escapes, unworthy of an aim.
 Amid the marsh's rushy skirts, her nest
 Is slightly strewn; four eggs of olive hue
 Spotted with black, she broods upon: her young,
 Soon as disencumbered of the fragile shell,
 Run lively round their dam. She, if a dog
 Or man intrude upon her bleak domains,
 Skims, clamouring loud, close at their feet, with wing
 Stooping, as if impeded by a wound;
 Meantime her young, among the rush-roots, lurk
 Secure. Ill-omened bird! oft in the times
 When monarchs owned no sceptre but the sword,
 Far on the heathy waste that stretches wide
 From Avondale to Loudon's high-coned hill,
 Thou, hurrying on the panting fugitive,
 Through dreary moss and moor, hath screaming led
 The keen pursuer's eye: oft hast thou hung,
 Like a death flag, above the assembled throng
 Whose lips hymned praise, their right hands at their hilts;
 Who in defence of conscience, freedom, law,
 Looked stern with unaverted eyes on death
 In every form of horror. Bird of woe!
 Even to the tomb thy victims, by thy wing,
 Were haunted; o'er the bier thy direful cry

Was heard, while murderous men rushed furious on,
 Profaned the sacred presence of the dead,
 And filled the grave with blood. At last, nor friend,
 Nor father, brother, comrade, dares to join
 The train that frequent winds adown the heights :
 By feeble female hands the bier is borne,
 While on some neighbouring cairn the aged sire
 Stands bent, his grey locks waving in the blast.
 But who is she that lingers by the sod
 When all are gone ? 'Tis one who was beloved
 By him who lies below : Ill-omened bird !
 She never will forget — never forget —
 Thy dismal soughing wing, and doleful cry.



LAPWING.

THE CRESTED LAPWING, Peewit, Peesweep, Tuchit, or Green Plover.—The *Tringa Vanellas* of Linnæus, *Vanellus Cristatus* of Macgillivray, is the only representative we have of the genus *Vanellas*, or Lapwings, which are birds similar in most respects to the Plovers ; the chief points of difference being the possession of a small hind toe, and somewhat longer legs, with wings broader and more rounded towards the end. The species above-named is an extremely elegant and lively bird, with plumage of black and glossy green on the upper parts of the head and body, and white beneath ; it has a long silky crest projecting from

the back of the head, and turning upward at the end, which adds greatly to the elegance of its appearance. The common names of the bird are derived from its peculiar mode of flight, and from its singular cry, resembling the word *peewit* or *peesweep*, uttered in a shrill wavering manner; its general length is about thirteen inches, extent of wings thirty inches. It is a constant resident in Britain, being pretty generally distributed, and frequenting heaths, moors, and marshy pastures, in summer, and often resorting to the sea coast in winter. The following account of its habits, evidently the result of close observation, is from 'Wayside Notes on British Birds,' published in Chambers's Journal for May, 1862:—

Of all the British birds that furnish entertainment to the wayside observer, commend me, during a part of the year at least, to the Lapwing. All through the summer, or breeding season, this bird seems to be an ornithological compound of the shrill fishwife, the pugilist, and the mountebank. No right of passage will it grant through its temporary dominions to any other bird. The Rook, master of so many, finds a complete master here. The pugnacity of the Lapwing is only equalled by its agility. The swiftness of its flight, which at any other time is of a very ordinary kind, can, when roused to action, be increased to something remarkable, and is dreadfully annoying to the clumsier Rook, which is often perplexed at the sudden dexterity of the Lapwing's charge. Rising with a graceful sweep far above its antagonist, it will come down with a rush and a scream, as if it would bear all before it to the earth. After it has successfully driven away all intruders, it will join its mate in a kind of airy dance, or waltz on the wing, then dash with loud cry to within a few inches of the ground, as if struck with a bullet or a sudden fit of apoplexy. Though the Peewit, or Peesweep, as it is called in the north, is so very audacious in attacking birds, it assumes a different demeanour towards men. The many curious ways it has of luring people from the vicinity of its nest, or what serves as such, are so well known, that all searchers for its now valuable eggs — which are sold as Plovers' — are aware that their only chance of success lies in paying no regard whatever to the parent bird.

Numerous as are its wiles, it would have fared hard indeed with the Lapwings of one district had they not found a powerful protector in that special prerogative of gentlemen — game preserving. Instead of the usual notice from the dealer that he would be at such a place, on such a day, to give the best price for Peasweep-eggs, &c., the searchers for this delicacy had one of a more ominous nature from Sir Gragory Grouse, that all trespassers would be prosecuted according to law. It was amusing to hear the rustic guesses at why

such a value should be placed on these eggs by the 'quality.' Some held that the prettily-dappled shells were used in printing the fine dresses of the ladies; others that the yolks were used to give a peculiar richness to the complexion; whilst others, again, stuck stoutly to it that they formed a new dye for the hair. Whatever diversity of opinion there might be on that head, all were cordially agreed that it could not be the mere taste that made them so precious; no one could be so extravagantly foolish as to give such a price for the eating of eggs so small, when good hen or duck eggs, double and treble the size, could be had for less than a third of the money.

Few of our familiar feathered friends undergo a more marked change than the Lapwing does in autumn; if, as the poet says —

In the spring the wanton Lapwing gets himself another crest;

he certainly gets another coat at the fall of the year, his glossy green shaded black changing to a dingy brown like that of the females. They now leave their solitary, semi-cultivated districts, and flocking together in immense numbers, become silent and inoffensive, drawing more and more towards the coasts as winter approaches.

The rambler in the country may at this period see vast numbers of these birds in bare pasture lands, covering the ground at intervals of a yard or two. Not a cry is uttered by the whole flock, though now and again one will run a few yards in their peculiarly graceful style. As you stop to look at them every head is raised, every eye is watching you, till at the raising of your stick or umbrella they will all rise together, in a way that might serve for a model of precision to the best drilled regiments in her Majesty's service.

It is thus that Thomas Aird poetically describes these birds:—

But, ah! October's faded eves!
Trooping down the barren shore,
The Lapwings wheel their veering flight
The sandy ferry o'er and o'er,
Now they're black and now they're white;
Hoarser brawl the wind-curl'd rills;
From out yon gap in the far hills
The hail-blast drifting white and slow
(How the fir-wood glooms below!)
Seems to come on, but thin and rare,
Disperses as it hangs in air.

Jesse, in his 'Gleanings,' speaks of the artifice of this bird, saying—'If you go near the nest of the Lapwing, one of the old birds will fly close to you, and try to draw you from their nest. I have seen my dog almost struck by one of the birds as she flew past him, and they seem

quite to forget their own danger in the endeavour to preserve their offspring. It is said that when a hind hears the hounds, she will allow herself to be hunted in order to lead them away from her fawns.'

And, again, in 'Marvels and Mysteries of Instinct,' we find it stated that —

The Lapwing plays her part to mislead the person in quest of her nest in a manner very similar to that acted by the Partridge; with this difference only, that the latter is much less on the wing than the former. Nothing is more difficult than to find the nests of these singular birds. How many times has their art tantalised our ardent desire to satisfy a strong curiosity of youth. In vain have we followed the bird, and in vain gone from her. In vain have we taken the direction of all the cardinal points. In vain have we made the circle, and gone from centre to circumference. It has been even difficult to say whether we have been in the right field or not, for such is the distance this species of Plover will lead their pursuers. At length we have grown weary, and after giving up the search in despair, have retired, leaving the bird to return with an air of triumph.

The Lapwing, if obliged to quit her nest, does not take wing immediately, but runs to a very long distance and then rises. All this time, too, she remains very quiet, and it is only when fairly away that she breaks her silence. The *peewit* then becomes endless, and is given in a tone remarkably plaintive. As she nears and beats about the intruder, her tones get louder, often gliding into a whine or scream, at the same time she is flying round and round, and tossing and tumbling herself in the air. The further she makes from her nest, and appearing to be going on successfully, the more clamorous is her noise, as if she really would, if possible, impress the belief upon the mind of the invader that he was directing his course to the very spot she was so anxious to be avoided; and herein lies the beauty and perfection of her art. But if the nest, on the contrary, be actually approached, the apparently sagacious creature ceases either to make a noise or to manifest concern at all. It is not possible to carry the artifice further; the climax is complete. Human reason, being acquainted with the bird's stratagem, might devise other schemes to mislead men who were in possession of the same knowledge; but none better calculated to allure away an animal, or a human being who was ignorant of the Lapwing's practice. The phenomenon is as admirable as it is marvellous.

An anonymous author tells us that, when the Lapwing wants to procure food, it seeks for a worm's nest, and stamps the ground by the side of it with its feet, after the manner of boys in order to procure worms for fishing. After doing this for a short time, the bird waits for the

issue of the worm from the hole, who, alarmed at the shaking of the ground, endeavours to make its escape, when he is immediately seized and becomes the prey of this ingenious bird.

Bishop Mant's lines on this bird are too descriptive of its habits to be omitted here:—

Seek we the marsh. Or ere your eye
From far his active form descry,
Your ear amid his noisy sport
Will tell the Lapwing's loved resort,
For now from field or sandy shore
In congregated crowds they pour,
Bound o'er the land, now here now there,
Or sport and frolic in the air
With restless wing; or tap the ground
In hope the oft-repeated sound
May penetrate the shaking mould
And fright the earth-worm from his hold;
Then rest they, till the closing day
The signal gives to seek their prey
Where the long worm and shrouded fly
Close in their marshy burrows lie:
Then issue forth by nature's power
To banquet through the midnight hour,
Till the grey dawn their ardour daunt,
And warn them to their woodland haunt.

Shakspeare, we may remember, notices one of the habits of this bird when he says—

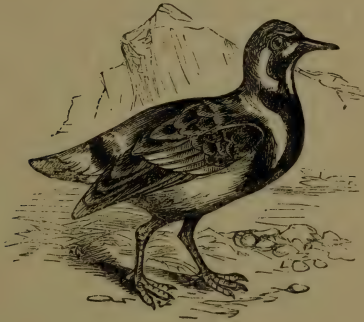
For look where Beatrice, like a Lapwing runs
Close to the ground to hear our conference.

And Burns, to the shrill cry which it emits—

Thou green-crested Lapwing, thy screaming forbear,
I charge you disturb not my slumbering fair.

THE COLLARED TURNSTONE. The *Tringa Interpres* of Linnæus, *Strepsilas Interpres* of Macgillivray.—This again is the sole British representative of a restricted genus called *Strepsilas*; it is a lively and handsome bird, about the size of the Dotterel, that is, nine inches and a half; its plumage is black, white, and brown, mostly in large and

distinct patches, so as to render it a conspicuous object ; it has a sharp, moderately long, and slightly turned-up bill. The name by which this species is commonly known has its origin in the method which it adopts of searching for food by turning over the small stones with its strong beak, to get at the marine insects and molluscs which lurk beneath. It is found chiefly on the seashore, and margins of lakes and tidal



TURNSTONE.

rivers. It is generally distributed over the coasts of nearly all the known world, so that Mr. Gould remarks — ‘If any bird may be regarded as cosmopolitan it is the Turnstone, for it inhabits the seashores of every part of the globe.’ It visits our coasts in the end of October, remaining until the beginning of May, associating in flocks of considerable size, flying swiftly with regularly turned beats and often in semicircular curves, and running with great celerity. The American naturalist Audubon testifies that its common name is not a misnomer, stating that when on a beach on Galveston Island, as he and a sailor were carrying the carcass of a deer to wash in the water, they disturbed four Turnstones, which ‘merely ran a little distance out of our course, and, on our returning, came back immediately to the same place; this they did four different times, and after we were done, they remained busily engaged in searching for food. None of them were more than fifteen

or twenty yards distant, and I was delighted to see the ingenuity with which they turned over the oyster-shells, clods of mud, and other small bodies left exposed by the retiring tide. Whenever the object was not too large, the bird bent its legs to half their length, placed its bill beneath it, and with a sudden jerk of the head, pushed it off, when it quickly picked up the food which was thus exposed to view, and walked deliberately to the next shell to perform the same operations. In several instances, when the clusters of oyster-shells, or clods of mud, were too heavy to be removed in the ordinary way, they would not only use the bill and head, but also the breast, pushing the object with all their strength, and reminding me of the labour which I have undergone in turning over a large turtle. Among the sea-weeds that had been cast on the shore, they used only the bill, tossing the garbage from side to side with a dexterity extremely pleasant to behold. In this manner I saw these four Turnstones examine almost every part of the shore along a space of from thirty to forty yards.'

Temminck states that this bird 'nestles in the north; forms a slight hollow in the sand of the shores, and lays three or four eggs of a greyish olive or greenish colour, marked with brown spots.' It has never been found breeding in Britain, nor indeed has it been seen here in the summer months at all. Hewetson found its nests on the coasts of Norway, placed against ledges of rock, sheltered and concealed by juniper bushes; he says, 'we were frequently led to the spot from a considerable distance by the extreme anxiety and pugnacity evinced by this bird in its bold attacks upon the larger sea fowl, especially Richardson's Skua, the egg-devouring enemy of other sea birds.'

THE PIED OYSTER CATCHER.—This is a bird with many aliases; it is called by Linnæus and other naturalists *Hemastopus Ostralegus*; by more unlearned folk, the Sea Pie, Sea Pict, Pianet, Cholldrick, Trillachan, &c. With a remarkably long, and somewhat stout bill, rendered conspicuous by its bright red colour; purplish red legs and feet; black and white tail; and body black in the upper parts

and white beneath ; a small oblong head, set upon a longish neck ; stout and yet longish legs, and short and rounded tail. Such is the Oyster Catcher, whose habits may to a great extent be inferred from its name : a haunter of the sea-shore, and a feeder upon the molluscous animals which are there found ; inserting the truncated edge of its wedge-like beak between the two portions of a bivalve shell,



OYSTER CATCHER.

such as the cockle and the oyster, it contrives to open them, and feast upon the delicate contents. Seaby says that it is ' a handsome bird when seen upon the wing, from the well-marked contrast, and the purity of the black and white colours of its plumage ; it runs with rapidity, and can swim and dive with ease ; may frequently be seen to swim short distances when searching for its food, but seldom dives, unless to avoid or escape an enemy.'

A slight hollow among the gravel or pebbles, above high-water mark, suffices for the nest of this bird ; the eggs are generally three, sometimes four in number, of a pale greyish yellow colour, spotted and blotched all over with brown of several shades. ' While reposing,' says Macgillivray, ' the Sea Pie stands with its legs quite straight, or uses one leg only, the other being drawn up ; the body horizontal, the neck retracted, the head either directed forward, or with the bill buried among the feathers of the back. In

this position they present a curious appearance when there is a high wind, as in that case each individual directs his breast towards it, and on a sandy beach or level shore, they often stretch out in long lines. When going to sleep, however, it rests upon one leg only. In open sandy places I have seen the flocks crouch. Its flight is strong and steady, performed by regular beats of the extended wings, the neck drawn in, and the feet directed backwards as in the other grallæ. At all seasons it is very shy and vigilant, seldom permitting one to approach within shooting distance, and with its shrill cries alarming less wary birds. Its alarm-note is a single shrill scream, but on some occasions it emits a modulated softened cry of several notes. When wounded, so as to be unable to fly, it readily betakes itself to the water, and swims off, sitting high, and moving with considerable speed.

‘Should one consider the Sea Pie the most beautiful of our native birds, I could not much censure his taste. When by the silver Dee, gliding rapidly along, amidst corn fields, pastures, and fragrant birch woods, you hear a loud and shrill cry, and turning about, see a pair winging their flight up the country, their glossy black and pure white plumage contrasting strongly with everything around, and their long vermilion beaks giving them a strange and foreign aspect, they never fail to rivet your gaze. Equally attractive are they when running about on some grassy meadow, picking up an insect or a slug, then standing, and again advancing with quick short steps, prettily tripping it among the gowans; then emitting their loud alarm-cries, and flying off to a more distant place, or alighting on the pebbly beach. No creature but man seems to molest them; but of his advances they are always suspicious, as good need they have to be.’

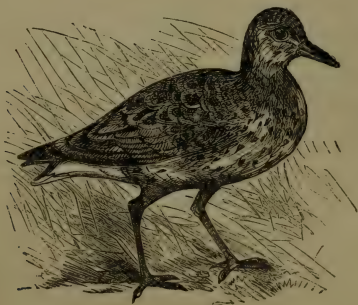
CHAPTER VII.

SANDPIPERS, &C. : — THE BLACK-BREASTED, ASH-COLOURED, PURPLE, CURLEW-BILLED, PECTORAL, SCHINZ'S, FLAT-BILLED, TEMMINCK'S, AND LITTLE SANDPIPERS — SANDERLING — CURLEW — WHIMBREL, BAR, AND BLACK-TAILED GODWITS — RUFF AND REEVE — PHALAROPE AND LOBEFOOT.

UNDER the scientific name *Tringinae*, Macgillivray has grouped several species of birds, which agree in presenting certain characteristics, distinguishing them from the *Pluvialinae*, or Plovers, to which they are very closely allied. They have, as a rule, smaller and more compressed heads than the members of the latter family, longer and more slender bills, and comparatively small eyes, these organs in the Plovers being remarkably large and full. They are also more aquatic in their habits, some of them swimming habitually, and with ease. They run with great speed, have a rapid flight, and emit loud shrill cries. In winter they are gregarious, often collecting in vast flocks, and searching the seashores for food, which consists of mollusca, crustacea, and insects.

The Scottish naturalist above named commences his account of this family with the following picture of their haunts and habits :— ' Who that has often visited the shores of the ocean, wandered along the extended sand beaches on the margin of which the waves terminate their career in foam and uproar, or visited the muddy estuaries alternately filled and emptied by the periodical floods, has not stood to gaze upon the flocks of tiny birds that were busily picking up their food from the moist ground, or wheeling, as if in sport, their devious flights, now skimming the

surface of the water, now rising high above the breakers, and then shooting far off to sea, to visit a distant part of the coast? How often in visiting a sedgy pool, surrounded with marshes, have we been saluted, but in no friendly wise, by the shrill clamour of the long-billed and sharp-winged birds, which had placed their nests on tufts too remote to be reached! Again, on the long range of heathery hills that we had traversed for many a weary mile, we have come, very unexpectedly to us, and with no welcome from its occupants, upon the nest of the lonely Curlew, which fluttered from among our feet in silence and terror, until reaching a safe distance, she began to entice us away from her treasure by displaying a broken wing, and shattered leg—taught, in fact, by instinct, to act a palpable untruth. Many pleasant sights we have seen in these solitary rambles—here the four spotted eggs of the Dunlin, so like in colour to the surrounding ground, that you wonder how the eye has distinguished them—here the timid young of the same bird squatted among the short heath—here a flock of Godwits, thrusting their long bills into the sand; and, again, the gliding and low flights of the beautiful white-breasted Tattler, as skimming by the margin of the great lake it emits its shrill and reiterated cries.’



DUNLIN.

THE BLACK-BREASTED SANDPIPER, or DUNLIN (*Tringa Cinclus*).—As the typical birds of the family, we commence

with the true Sandpipers, which form the genus *Tringa*, and of which no less than ten species are residents in, or visitors to, the British Isles. The above-named is the commonest, and therefore claims the first place; it is known by a variety of names, such as Purge, Stint, Sea Snipe or Lark, Plover's Page, Ox-bird, Ox-eye, Dorbie, &c. There is scarcely a part of the coasts of Great Britain, or Ireland, in which this bird is not found in considerable numbers during a great part of the year, but especially in the autumn and winter. During the breeding season the Dunlins betake themselves to the moors and other waste places, often but a short distance from their marine haunts; some, however, retire to more northerly climes. Their nests are slight hollows in dry places, lined, perhaps, with a few sprigs of withered heath or dry grass, irregularly placed: the eggs are four in number, of a light grey greenish colour, spotted and blotched with umber and purplish brown. Audubon says, that 'if during incubation a person approaches their retreats, the male especially, but frequently the female also, flies up to meet the intruder, settles on a tuft near him, or runs along, and uses the same artifices for decoying him from the nest or young as the Plover or Ring Dotterel.'

The usual length of this bird is about seven inches and a-half; the general colour of the plumage of the upper parts is brownish grey, each feather having a dusky central line; at the sides the tints grow paler, until they become altogether white on the throat, breast, and abdomen. The male and female are much alike in colour, the latter being considerably larger than the former. 'During autumn,' says Yarrell, 'particularly when the parent birds return to their marine localities, and are joined by their broods of the year, immense flocks of Dunlins may be seen busily employed close to the edge of the sea, searching and probing for the minute animals on which they feed. They frequent sandy flats and bars which project into the sea; they are observed to be incessantly upon the move, shifting their ground perpetually, running nimbly along, or taking short flights from place to place, frequently wading to follow the aquatic insects, worms, mollusca, and the smaller

thin-skinned crustacea, which are put in motion by every receding wave. If disturbed, the whole flock take wing together, and wheeling along in half circles near the edge of the water or the mud, each bird exhibits alternately a dark or light appearance to the observer, as the upper or under side of its body happens to be turned to him.'

During the winter many dozens are shot for the table on various parts of the coast, and are considered to be very good eating; they are in best condition, however, in autumn, and are therefore most carefully sought by sportsmen at that season.

Macgillivray was surprised on approaching a flock of these pretty shore searchers, too intent on their occupation to notice him, to hear from them a gentle warble, which was composed of feeble notes resembling the syllables *pee, pee, pee*, continually repeated, and with more frequency when the individuals came very near each other. When searching the beaches on which waves are breaking, they utter louder, although still faint cries, and by stooping more rapidly seem to jerk up their tail, although it is seldom raised above the level of the back; none of the birds of this family depress the tail when stooping.

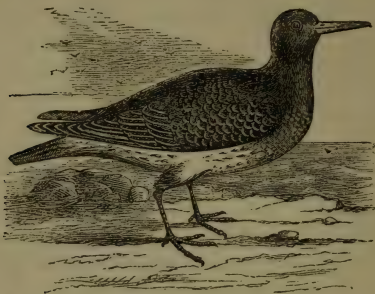
The Dunlins appear to breed in great numbers on the heaths and islands of Scotland: being found frequently in the haunts of the Golden Plover, they have been called 'Plover's Pages.' Towards the middle of April they leave the coasts for their breeding grounds, where they remain until about the end of August, living on insects and worms found in the mud of the shallow pools, and the soft ground by the edges of lakes and marshes. The young, like those of the Plover and Lapwing, leave the nest directly they are excluded from the egg, and run about, crouching close to the ground for concealment when alarmed. When able to shift for themselves, they remain some weeks on the shores with their parents, forming small flocks, which often as evening approaches collect into larger, resting at night on the smoother parts of the heath. If disturbed they stretch up their wings, utter a few low notes, and stand on the alert, or perhaps run a short distance and then pause; they are not generally very shy, or difficult to shoot.

THE ASH-COLOURED SANDPIPER, or KNOT, sometimes called the Grey, Red, or Red-breasted Sandpiper (*Tringa Canutus*).—This is a larger bird than the Dunlin, measuring about ten and a-half inches to the end of the tail, it has a long straight bill, with the tip considerably dilated. The plumage in winter is ash grey above, white beneath, with dusky streaks on the sides; in summer glossy black on the back, with yellowish red variegations; the neck and breast yellowish red. The ash-coloured Sandpipers appear on the British coasts in small flocks in the beginning of September, sometimes a little earlier, and they remain there, seldom going far inland, until the end of April or beginning of May. They breed in the northern parts of both continents, frequenting in summer the marshy districts. In the nature of their food and general habits they closely resemble the Dunlins. The old historian Camden says, that ‘these birds derive their name from King Canute, Knute, or Knout, as he is sometimes called; probably because they were a favourite dish with that monarch,’ as they appear to have been with others, for in the Norfolk Household Book, which dates back to 1519, are several entries of rewards to fowlers for bringing in Knots. On their first arrival on our shores, their capture is not at all difficult, indeed they are stupidly tame, to prove which it may be mentioned that Sir William Jardine met with a large flock on the east side of Holy Island, in the month of September, of which he killed as many as he wanted with stones from the beach, and others have obtained specimens in the same way.

On some parts of our coasts the Knots often form large flocks in winter; but they are not so abundant as the Dunlins, although they are more frequently seen in the markets, owing to the ease with which they are captured. Macgillivray says that their flesh is not inferior in flavour to that of the Golden Plover.

THE PURPLE SANDPIPER, sometimes called the Rock Sandpiper (*Tringa maritima*).—This is a larger and more robust bird than the Dunlin, measuring generally about nine and a-quarter inches in length; it has a bill somewhat longer than the head, and slightly decurved at the end, colour

dusky with orange at the base; the feet are dull yellow. In winter the upper parts of the plumage are of a glossy purplish black, with light grey margins to the feathers; the head, cheeks, sides, and fore parts of the neck are light purplish grey, streaks of which may be observed on the sides and lower tail coverts; the throat, part of the breast, and belly are white. In summer the back remains much the



PURPLE SANDPIPER.

same, except that the feathers are margined with light red and tipped with white; pale red also margins the head feathers, and streaks and spots of dusky grey are seen on the white under parts.

These birds appear on our coasts in small flocks about the middle of October, and remain until the end of spring. 'They fly in curves,' says Macgillivray, 'sweeping over the sea when removing from one place to another, and now and then emitting a faint shrill cry, in the manner of the Dunlins, which they also closely resemble in their mode of walking, or rather running along the shore, where they search the rocks and fens for small testaceous mollusca, or crabs and onisci. No instance of their breeding in this country has yet been recorded.' Dr. Richardson says, that they breed on the shores of Hudson Bay, where they are common. They lay eggs of a greyish yellow colour with small irregular spots of pale brown, crowded at the obtuse end, and spare at the other. Although not rare during the period

of their visit, they are not very frequently seen, because they seldom go in large flocks, and hunt for food in retired rocky places, where they may be observed, at ebb tide especially, following each retiring wave, to pick small shell-fish from the stones, and displaying great activity in escaping the reflux of the tide.

In the decided summer plumage, and in the various consequent vernal and autumnal changes, of both this kind and the Dunlin, the differences are very obvious, this species changing to red underneath, and the Dunlin to black.

It seems likely that these birds may occasionally breed here. In the last week of May 1833, Mr. Gould shot a pair near Sandwich, in full summer plumage. Mr. Thompson states, that this species is a regular summer visitant in Ireland, and small flocks of them are frequently to be seen in the autumn in Cornwall, Devonshire, and Hampshire, and sometimes also in Kent, Norfolk, Durham, and Northumberland, as well as in Scotland. This appears to be the bird which Pennant describes in his 'Arctic Zoology,' under the name of the Red Sandpiper; it is said to visit the shores of the Caspian Sea, Lake Baikal, and especially the mouth of the Don.

According to Temminck, Holland is an occasional breeding place with this species, whose eggs are said to be yellowish white spotted with brown. It, no doubt, breeds far to the north in America in the summer, and migrates, as Audubon states, as far south as Florida in the winter.

THE CURLEW-BILLED SANDPIPER (*Tringa subarquata*), sometimes called the Pigmy Curlew, or Pigmy Sandpiper. —This bird is very like the black-breasted species, for which it is, no doubt, frequently mistaken; its bill is half as long again as the head, and slightly decurved near the end, like that of the Dunlin, than which species the one under notice is considerably larger, being generally about nine inches in length.

Yarrell calls this the Curlew Sandpiper, and says, one of the earliest notices referring to it as a British bird occurs in Boys' History of Sandwich, in reference to a specimen shot in that neighbourhood; and Pennant refers to a second

example, killed in August at Greenwich. The species was formerly considered to be a rare visitor to this country, but probably remained in some instances undistinguished, when in its winter plumage, from the Dunlin, for the same reason; the beak, however, is longer, more slender, as well as more curved; the legs longer and thinner, and the bare part above the joint is of greater extent; there is also a constant and marked difference in the rump and the upper tail coverts, which in this bird are invariably white, but in the Dunlin the feathers along the central line of the rump, and upper tail coverts, are of the same colour as those of the back.

THE PECTORAL AND BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPERS (*Tringa pectoralis*, and *T. rufescens*).—These are both rare species with us, but two or three specimens of the first have been taken in the country; it is found in various parts of the United States, migrating north and west to breed. Audubon describes it as not uncommon along the eastern shores of the coasts in autumn and winter; and Nuttall, in his 'Manual of the Ornithology of the United States and of Canada,' gives this description of its habits:—'I have observed that the flight of the Pectoral Sandpiper resembles that of the Knot, and is firm, rapid, and well-sustained. It skims rather low over the surface of the water or the land, and at times shoots high up into the air, propelling itself with double rapidity and perfect silence. It runs with great agility, and probes the sand or wet earth, immersing its bill up to the base.' The length of this American Sandpiper is about nine inches, that of the Buff-breasted is an inch less; this latter is also a rare species in Europe, although well-known in America; it is common in Brazil, and is found in Louisiana, and occasionally in the more northern states. The author above quoted tells us that 'this elegant species, some seasons, is not uncommon in the markets of Boston, in the months of August and September, being met with near the capes of Massachusetts Bay. Specimens have also been obtained in the vicinity of New York.'

The two species here associated are much alike in form

and habits, and, frequenting the same localities, are no doubt often confounded with each other.

SCHINZ'S AND THE FLAT-BILLED SANDPIPERS (*Tringa Schinzii* and *T. Platyrhyncha*).—The first of these, which is named after M. Schinz, a Swedish naturalist, is about seven inches in length, the last is somewhat smaller. They are both rare birds in Britain, not more than two or three specimens of either having been obtained here. The first is found chiefly in America, along the eastern coast from Florida to Labrador; the last is not included among the birds of that continent by its ornithologists. Temminck states that this species extends from the north of Europe to the islands of the Indian Archipelago, and it is reported to occur also on the continent of India. It has been met with in Germany, France, and Italy, but is nowhere common in Europe, except during the breeding season, in Norway and Lapland, where its habits have been observed by Mr. Dunn. Its nest, like that of the Snipe, is a hummocky tuft of grass, and its eggs of a deep chocolate colour. It is a later breeder than the Sandpipers generally. On being disturbed it soars to a great height in the air, rising and falling suddenly, like the Snipe, and uttering the notes *too-who*, rapidly repeated.

TEMMINCK'S AND THE LITTLE SANDPIPERS (*Tringa Temminckii* and *T. minuta*).—We have here again two very rare members of the genus *Tringa*, the first of them being the smallest of that genus which has a place among British birds, measuring generally about five inches and three-quarters in length. Yarrell calls it Temminck's Stint, and says that it frequents the borders of rivers and fresh-water lakes, at a distance from the coast, like our common Sandpiper, but is sometimes found in the sandy or muddy creeks and shores of the sea. Several specimens have been taken in this country, but little of its habits appears to be known. It is said to breed on the shores of northern Europe. The Little Stint, as the last-named author terms the second of the above species, is generally about six inches long, and is not so rare a bird with us as Temminck's,

as it sometimes visits our shores in small flocks; still not many specimens have been taken here, and we are almost wholly unacquainted with its habits. When seen it is often in company with the Dunlin and other Sandpipers on the sandy shores of the sea. Some have supposed it to breed in the Arctic regions; it occurs in autumn, winter, and spring in various parts of Europe, has been found in Asia and Africa, but not in America.

THE COMMON SANDERLING (*Calidris arenaria*).—We here enter upon another genus, termed *Calidris*, which is formed of a single species, which might have been included in the genus *Tringa*, but for the absence of the hind toe; this necessitates its separation from the Sandpipers, with which otherwise it exactly agrees. Mr. Yarrell places this bird with the Plovers, and says that he has obtained specimens on our northern and eastern coasts, and in the London markets, in the months of January, April, June, at the end of August, and again in October; yet it is not considered to breed in this country. The whole length of the adult bird is about eight inches; when in summer plumage it is sometimes called the Ruddy Sandpiper, on account of the rufous tint pervading some parts of its plumage. In this country it has several names, such as Curwillet, Towilly, Sand Lark, and Ox-bird. Macgillivray gives this account of its habits:—

The Sanderlings appear in small flocks on our northern coasts, on both sides of the island, as early as the beginning of September. Their numbers gradually increase until winter, when they are met with in all parts; they collect in small bands, which frequent the sandy shores and muddy estuaries, often mingling with the various species of *Tringa*, but especially with the Dunlins. In searching for their food, which consists of small worms, testacea, and sometimes insects, they run with rapidity when following the margin of the wave, but more sedately under other circumstances, patting and probing the soft sand or mud with their bills, which they seldom introduce to any depth. It is pleasant to watch a flock so occupied, the liveliness of the little creatures, and their clean and beautiful plumage, together with the mutual good will and forbearance which they exhibit, render them most agreeable companions. When alarmed, they fly off in a body, uttering occasionally a shrill cry, move with great rapidity, now all inclining to one side, now to the

other, and performing various evolutions. In sunshine they may be perceived at a very great distance by the glancing of their white under parts. At first they are not shy, and might be easily approached; but after being molested, they become rather vigilant. At high water they repose on the sands or in their neighbourhood, sometimes by themselves, but often in company with Dunlins and Ringed Plovers. Like those species, they also feed by moonlight. Individuals are sometimes seen on various parts of the coast during summer, but it does not appear that this species breeds in any part of Britain.



CURLEW.

THE GREAT CURLEW (*Scolopax*, or *Numenius arquata*).— This is the largest and most common representative of the genus *Numenius*, comprising the true Curlews, of which but two species are known in Britain; they differ from the Sandpipers in having a very short tongue, that organ in those birds being long and pointed. In the elongated and decurved bill they resemble the Storks. In the Great Curlew, which is variously called the Whaap, Whaup, Stock Whaap, and Whitterick, the bill is from five to seven inches long, the whole length of the bird not exceeding twenty-eight inches; it has a tolerably stout body, supported on long slender shanks, and a neck of moderate length. The plumage of the head, neck, and fore part of the back, is light reddish grey, streaked with dark brown; the hind part of the back is white, with dark markings of a narrow longitudinal form; the tail, breast, and abdomen

are white, the former having black bars across it, and the latter dark marks and spots of a similar shape to those on the back. This species has not been found in America, but it is dispersed over the greater part of Europe, and probably of Asia, from many parts of which skins have been transmitted. In Britain it is one of our aquatic birds, and it remains with us through the year, breeding on all the elevated moors, from Cornwall and Devonshire to the northern extremity of Scotland, and shifting from the hills to the sea shores, and back again, according to the season. It is towards the end of March that they generally leave the shores, where they have resided in flocks, from September, and, separating in pairs, betake themselves to the interior, where, on the highest and less frequented moors, they deposit their eggs, and rear their young. Here is Macgillivray's picture of their home life a little later in the season:—

It is now the beginning of May. The sunny banks are covered with primroses, the golden catkins of the willow fringe the brooks, while the spikes of the cotton-grass ornament the moss-clad moor. Let us ascend the lonely glen, and wandering on the heathy slopes, listen to the clear but melancholy whistle of the Plover, the bleating of the Snipe, and the loud screams of the Curlew. Here is a bog interspersed with tufts of heath, among which is a profusion of *Myrica gale*. Some Lapwings are coming up, gliding and flapping along; a Black-breasted Plover has stationed himself on the top of a mound of green grass, and a Ring Ouzel has just sprung from the furze on the brae. See! What is that? A Hare among our feet? No, a Curlew fluttering along the ground, wounded, unable to escape; run! she has been sitting. Here is the nest in a hollow, under the shelter of two tufts of heath, and a stunted willow. It is composed of dry grass, some twigs of heath, and perhaps portions of other plants not very neatly disposed. It is very shallow, and about a foot in diameter. The eggs are four, pyriform and excessively large, three inches long, an inch and ten-twelfths across, light olive or dull yellowish brown, or pale greyish green, blotched and spotted with umber brown, the markings crowded on the larger end; so little do they contrast in colour with the surrounding objects, that unless the bird spring up among our feet, we should scarcely have observed them. Far up on the hill side you hear the loud cry of the Curlew, which is presently responded to from the opposite slope; in another place a bird commences a series of modulated cries, and springing up, performs a curved flight, flapping its wings and screaming as it proceeds. Presently the whole glen is vocal, but not with sweet sounds like those of

the Mavis and the Merle. But it is in vain to pursue the birds, for they are the males; and at this season you will find them fully as shy as they were in winter on the sea shore. Some weeks hence, when the young are abroad, the females, and even the males, will flutter around you, if you approach the spot where their unfledged brood be concealed among the herbage, and will attempt by feigning distress to lead you into a vain pursuit.

At all seasons this bird appears to be extremely shy and suspicious, so much so that, unless by stratagem or accident, a successful shot at it can seldom be obtained. In the Hebrides the saying is rife, that to kill seven Curlews is enough for a lifetime.

In an old play we are invited—

To the wild northern bog, the Curlew's haunt;

And Charlotte Smith thus describes the home of the bird:—

On fields that shew
As angry heaven had rained sterility,
Stony and cold, and hostile to the plough,
Where clamouring loud the evening Curlew runs
And drops her spotted eggs among the flints.

According to a recent writer in 'Chambers's Journal,' who furnishes some pleasant 'Wayside Notes' on British Birds, this species is a great coward:—

The size of birds, like that of men, is evidently no criterion of courage: considerably larger than either the Rook or Lapwing, the Curlew will turn its tail on them both. Possessing great swiftness and power of wing in flight, the Curlew trusts more to that than to the power of the long lance-like bill, which would give it so much advantage in a duel, where the ceremony of measuring the weapons was dispensed with. It puts that 'power of beak' to a much pleasanter use, however, than fighting with its neighbour. When leaving the shores of the sea in spring, the Curlew and its mate go far among the wild hills and moors for breeding purposes. Here they love to tune their long pipes, and 'gaur their skirl,' waking the slumbering echoes of the silent glens with their melodious piping; as if, being birds of a highly poetic temperament, they were determined to perform the neglected duties of those piping shepherds, so plentiful in pastoral poems, and so prosaically rare in pastoral life.

The ideal shepherd of plays and poems, indeed, who is always supposed to be pleasantly piping to his listening flock, or warbling his ditty (a four or six part madrigal) to his sweet shepherdess—bears

no more resemblance to the shepherd of real life than the shrill treble of the Curlew does to the sonorous bass of the Moorcock, as he rises on the wing, or his deep *cluck, cluck, cluck*, as he drops again among the heather. The traveller through such weary wilds as the Curlew loves in summer, may well, at first, feel startled into the belief that he has 'fallen among thieves,' when he hears, apparently within a few yards, a loud clear whistle, repeated presently in the same tone, at a considerable distance, like the signal of some concealed banditti. Agreeable is his relief to find it is only the Curlew calling to its distant mate, which it presently flies off to join, and whilst sailing swiftly through the air, treats him to a solo on its long-curved pipe, beginning in a low key, and gradually swelling into a 'linked sweetness long drawn out.'

One cry peculiar to this bird sounds like *corlieu*, or *courlie*; hence its common English as well as French name; it is a wild plaintive sound, and coming to our ears as it sometime did while a flock of these partial migrants was resting on the marshes by the Medway, amid the stillness of night, it had a singularly thrilling effect. One Saturday evening in the month of August 1857, we remember to have heard the sad wailing cry of these birds on the wing, which appeared to fill the air above and around us; amid the gathering gloom it seemed like the wail of lost spirits. But on another occasion, the effect of the sound was greatly heightened by being heard during a storm, when, as a local paper reported, 'Flocks of Curlews, apparently alarmed at the raging of the elements, filled the air with their cries, and from the noise and the space over which it extended, there must have been hundreds of these birds on the wing.' Amid the wild and grand mountain scenery of his native land, to the Scotchman the shrill screaming cry of this bird may sound like an utterance of the spirit of the solitude. Burns says:—'I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the Curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of Grey Plovers in an autumnal evening, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poesy.'

We scarcely like the simile with which Mant concludes his picture of Curlew-life; as we cannot imagine the cry of a flock of Curlews to resemble, under any circumstances, that of a pack of hounds:—

Along the salt sea's oozy verge,
 When wafted high the ebbing surge,
 Unsheltered leaves the shelly fry,
 Hark! the Curlew's tumultuous cry:
 Now as, remote from human sight,
 In lonely pairs their vernal flight
 They speed o'er heathy mountain rude,
 Or some waste marsh's solitude,
 To the tall grass or bristling reed
 Their wild unnestled young to breed;
 And now along the peopled coast,
 In densely congregated host,
 Yet heedful of the thundering gun,
 Aloft on bluish legs they run,
 Or delve with slender bill and bowed
 The yielding sand; or shouting loud,
 To warn their comrades of the way,
 Lest darkling from the line they stray,
 Wake the dull night with startling sounds:
 Well might you deem the deep-mouthed hounds
 Raised in full cry the huntsman's peal,
 Or clamoured for their morning meal.

It is as a dweller by the sad sea wave that the Curlew presents itself under its most picturesque aspect, as the poets have not been slow to perceive; we have only space for two or three short quotations to prove this. Barton says:—

The sea, the sea! oh tell me not
 Of Art's triumphant power!
 Its proudest trophies are forgot
 In one lone sea-side hour:

Yon giant bark that breasts the tide,
 Though beautiful and brave,
 Beats not the Curlew in its pride,
 Which mounts the stormiest wave.

And Edmund Reade thus refers to the bird:—

Again the Curlew to her eirie springs,
 Bends to the sun, and dries her dripping wings.

* * * * * *

And the white Curlews gleamed in distant swarms,
 Like spirits soaring from the land of storms.

THE WHIMBREL (*Numenius phaeopus*), sometimes called the Little or Half Curlew, Tangwhaap, Mayfowl, Curlew Jack, in all respects, except size, very closely resembles the preceding species; its length seldom exceeds twenty inches. It is to be met with in spring, and the early part of summer, along the coasts of Britain, and again in autumn.



WHIMBREL.

Some state that it remains in diminished numbers throughout the winter. Dr. Fleming affirms that it breeds in Shetland, and others have found the nest in Orkney and others of the Scottish isles; the eggs are described as four in number, of a dark olive brown colour, blotched with darker brown, pear shaped, and measuring two inches five lines in length.

Macgillivray says of these birds, that 'they keep by themselves in flocks of from three or four, to twenty, not associating even with the Curlews, which also frequent the pastures, searching exclusively the sandy pasture grounds, showing no preference for wet places, and never betaking themselves to the fords or pools, although occasionally they may be seen in damp places. When on the wing they display the white part of the back conspicuously, and have a beautiful appearance.'

THE GODWIT (*Scolopax*, or *Limosa rufa*), often called the Bar-tailed Godwit, sometimes the Yarwhelp, Stone Plover, Poor Willie.—With this bird we enter upon another genus, termed by naturalists *Limosa*; it contains but two British species. Very closely allied to the Curlews, the



GODWIT.

Godwits resemble them in outward conformation, and the points of difference are mostly such as only the scientific naturalist would notice: the long and slender bill, which in the former birds has a decided downward curve, is nearly straight, having a slight inclination upward; the Godwits, too, are smaller, and of more slender make, and they differ from the Curlews somewhat in their habits. The length of the above-named species is from fifteen to seventeen inches, the bill being about four inches long. The plumage in winter is pale grey about the head and neck, with brownish grey streaks; the throat, breast, under parts, and a broad band under the eye, are pure white; the fore part of the back and scapulars are grey, with a central brown streak down each feather; the hind part of the back and tail are white, the latter having eight dusky bars. In summer, blackish brown and light yellowish red tints prevail over the grey and white.

The Godwits appear on the British coasts in small flocks in the beginning of September, chiefly about the mouths of

streams where there are muddy flats and shallows; they remain with us during the winter, and depart in April. They have a moderately rapid and buoyant flight, very like that of the Curlews, for which, no doubt, they are frequently mistaken. They walk, for the most part, slowly and sedately, tapping and probing the mud as they go in search of worms and other small creatures, sometimes in company with Sandpipers and other shore birds; occasionally they run, and when taking wing emit a low modulated sound, although their usual cry is a shrill whistle. It does not appear that they breed in any part of Britain. Mr. Thompson notes them as regular autumnal visitants in Ireland, where they sometimes remain until the spring; the number varies greatly in different years; on their first arrival they are very tame, and are easily shot, but they soon become more wary.

THE BLACK-TAILED GODWIT (*Scolopax*, or *Limosa ægocephala*), sometimes called the Red or Lesser Godwit, or Jadreka Snipe.—This species has a smaller body than the foregoing, but both the bill and legs are longer: much confusion has arisen among authors with respect to the identity of this and the preceding species, from the similarity of their size, form, plumage, &c., the latter changing very considerably in summer and winter, as well as in the male and female; but one permanent mark of distinction is indicated by the common name of this bird, in whose tail the terminal feathers are invariably black for about two-thirds of their length, while in the other species they are always barred throughout their whole length with black and white. This is a rarer bird with us than the bar-tailed species, although it is said to nestle sometimes in the fens of the eastern districts of England; it is rare in Scotland, and on the coasts of Ireland appears in autumn and winter in very limited numbers. It is said to be excellent eating. We know not whether it was this species to which Sir Thomas Brown refers, when writing his notes on natural history two hundred years ago, ‘Godwits are taken chiefly on marsh land; though other parts are not without them; they are accounted the daintiest dish in

England.' That in Ben Jonson's time the bird was considered an article of luxurious diet we may learn from this passage in one of his plays:—

You'r eating
Pheasant and Godwit here in London, haunting
The Globes and Mermaids; walking it with lords
Still at the table.

And Thomas Muffit, as Nares informs us in his 'Glossary,' 'the ever-famous doctor in physick,' as he is called in the title-page of his work entitled 'Health's Improvement,' says, 'A fat Godwit is so fine and light meat, that noblemen, yea, merchants too, by your leave, stick not to buy them at four nobles a dozen.' They are still occasionally sent up to the London market by the Lincolnshire fen men, when they happen to catch any.



RUFF.

THE COMMON RUFF (*Tringa*, or *Machetes pugnax*).—For grace and elegance commend us to the pair of birds called the Ruff and Reeve, the latter being the name applied to the female of this species. Our artist, we think, has scarcely done them justice, for no one can look at the dapper little gentleman, with his neck surrounded by a voluminous frill of silky feathers, without confessing that he is a

perfect beau. In Yarrell's 'British Birds' we have them to perfection, both in one picture; he on a bank, elevated considerably above his more plainly attired partner, with the ruff, from which he takes his name, fully displayed, and she beneath, with her slender neck and legs, and long bill and bright eye, looking the very perfection of neatness, and lightness, and self-possession. Beautifully mottled is the plumage of both, reddish brown of various shades, varying from light to black, with the under parts delicate grey, passing into white, and the feet greenish yellow—a pretty bird truly; and her lord and master, with his enormous ruff, which varies in colour in different individuals, has in summer a number of fleshy tubercles about his face, which give him somewhat the appearance of a *bon vivant*. He is fiery-eyed, too, and



REEVE.

looks as pugnacious a fellow as he is, hence his specific name *pugnax*. He is about twelve inches long, or nine inches without the tail, and can spread his wings over two feet; he has a bill nearly an inch and a half long, and although once a permanent resident in this country, now only comes as a visitor; that is, as a rule, a few individuals may, perhaps, remain with us through the year. He

took very much to heart the draining of the fens in various parts of the country, and the cultivation of waste lands generally, and left us in disgust, to seek wilder and more congenial breeding places, where the slight nest on the ground can be formed, and the four or five olive-coloured and spotted eggs can be laid, and the little Ruffings and Reevelings hatched, and reared free from molestation. Greatly disgusted, too, was the bird by a certain practice called Ruff-catching, which the dwellers in the fenny districts persisted in following, with the object of providing dainty morsels for epicures, who would actually give as much as three or four shillings each for their bodies. Here is Montagu's account of the extent to which this trade was carried. After speaking of the difficulty he had in discovering the abode of the Lincolnshire fowlers, who lived then (in 1813) on the verge of the fens, and supplied the dealers, who purchased the birds and furnished the markets with them, he goes on to say :—

At this time we were shown into a room, where there were about seven dozen males, and a dozen females, and of the former there were not two alike. This intrusion to choose our birds drove them from their stands, and, compelling some to trespass on the premises of others, produced many battles. By this fowler we learned that two guineas a dozen was now the price of fattened Ruffs, and he never remembered the price under thirty shillings when fit for the table.

Mr. Towns, the noted feeder at Spalding, assured us his family had been a hundred years in the trade; boasted that he had served George the Second, and many noble families in the kingdom. He undertook, at a dinner of the late Marquis of Townsend (when that nobleman was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland), to take some Ruffs to that country, and actually set off with twenty-seven dozen from Lincolnshire, left seven dozen at the Duke of Devonshire's at Chatsworth, and turned his route across the kingdom to Holyhead, and delivered seventeen dozen alive at Dublin, having lost only three dozen in so long a journey, confined and greatly crowded as they were in baskets, which were carried upon two horses.

Montagu goes on to state that the best time for taking Ruffs was in September, and to describe the modes of capture, into which we must not enter, as there are now very few Ruffs to catch.

This bird occupies the first place in Macgillivray's 'Family *Tringa*, or Sandpipers,' in which we for con-

venience have placed it last. By some authors it is classed with the Snipes.

THE GREY PHALAROPE (*Tringa*, or *Phalaropus lobatus*), sometimes called the Red Phalarope, or Coot-foot.

THE RED-NECKED LOBEFOOT (*Tringa*, or *Lobipes hyperboreus*), variously called the Red, Brown, or Hyperborean Phalarope.

These two birds are the only British members of the restricted family *Phalaropus*. By some naturalists they are placed with the Coots, but they seem to have greater affinities with the Sandpipers and Tattlers. They are small birds, and more decidedly aquatic in their habits than any we have yet described, being often met with far out at sea, seeking their food among masses of floating seaweed, on which they walk as confidently as on firm ground. They are both rare species with us, the first especially so, breeding in high northern latitudes. Extremely graceful in their forms and motions, and having plumage of black, white, and grey, prettily marked and blended, and in summer time enlivened and warmed with red and yellow edgings to the feathers.

British naturalists can tell us but little about the first species from actual observation. Audubon has described its habits somewhat minutely: of the second, the above-named author has also given an account, but this species has long been known as an inhabitant of the Orkney Islands. Mr. Bullock, in a letter to Montagu, gives this account of it as observed by him:—‘I found the Red Phalarope (this bird in its summer plumage) common in the marshes of Sanda and Westra in the breeding season, but which it leaves in the autumn. This bird is so extremely tame that I killed nine without moving out of the same spot, being not in the least alarmed at the report of the gun. It lays four eggs, of the shape of that of a Snipe, but much less, of an olive colour, blotched with dusky. It swims with the greatest ease, and when in the water, looks like a beautiful miniature duck, carrying its head close to its back in the manner of a Teal.’

CHAPTER VIII.

TATTLERS, &c. : — THE AVOCET — STILTSHANK AND LONGSHANK — DUSKY AND COMMON REDSHANKS — GREEN AND WOOD TATTLERS — WHITE-BREASTED AND SPOTTED WEETWEETS.

WE have here a family of birds so closely allied to the Sandpipers, that by most authors they are placed in the same group, in company with the Snipes. They possess, however, certain characteristics which seem to entitle them to a distinct arrangement, and are therefore, in Macgillivray's History, placed under the head *Totantinae*, or Tattlers. They are mostly remarkable for their slender bills and bodies, and elongated legs. They are true waders, living on the sea shore and marshy grounds by lakes, rivers, &c., feeding on mollusca, insects, and crustacea, which they obtain in the water, or mud and slime, which they probe with their long bills; they are swift runners, and have a rapid, buoyant, and wavering flight; when standing, they have a remarkable way of vibrating and balancing their bodies, giving one the impression that they are likely to fall, which, however, they never do. They are mostly migratory birds, and either construct very slight nests, or lay their eggs in a mere hollow, lined with a few vegetable fibres. They lay four spotted pear-shaped eggs. The British species of this family are nine in number.

THE BLACK AND WHITE AVOCET (*Recurvirostra Avocetta*), also called the Scooping Avocet, the Scooper, the Crooked Bill, the Cobbler's Awl, the Yelper, is the sole British representative of the genus *Recurvirostra*, birds with upturned beaks.—The bill of this bird is more than twice the length of the head, very slender, somewhat flattened, and tapering towards the point, and so curved as to

form the segment of a wide arch. The plumage is black and white with intermediate shades. Yarrell speaks of this as a singular looking bird, and as handsome as it is singular; the bill, which he likens to an elastic piece of whalebone, is, he doubts not, a delicate organ of touch, while the semi-



AVOCET.

palmated feet seem only intended to support the bird on soft mud, as it never attempts to paddle or swim when out of its depth, but allows itself to float along motionless. The Avocet, which once bred in the marshy districts of Norfolk, Kent, and some other counties, is now known only as a casual visitant, or winter resident. Temminck says that it forms a small cavity among the grass or in the sand, and lays two, seldom three, eggs of an olivaceous grey colour, sprinkled with numerous blackish spots.

Mudie says — ‘Avocets are restless and lively in their manners, more sportive than most of the other fen birds. They have not the hiding disposition of the Snipes, nor the demureness of the Godwits: in some of their habits they more resemble the Lapwing, especially in the finesse shown by the female to entice strangers away from her eggs or young. She meets the traveller, and flies around him in rapid circles, screaming *quheet, quheet!* but aspirated in a manner that cannot be expressed by letters. She also

runs, and limps, and drops one wing occasionally, as if it were broken; but in her evolutions upon the wing, she does not give those twitches in turning which are so striking, and, as formerly mentioned, sometimes do strike, in the Lapwing. The eggs are olive brown spotted with black; and, as is the case with most of the *grallæ*, they are large in proportion to the size of the bird.'

THE BLACK-WINGED STILTSHANK (*Himantopus melanopterus*), also called the Stilt, the Longshank, or Longlegs, and Long-legged Plover.

THE GREEN-LEGGED LONGSHANK (*Glottis chloropus*), also called the Greenshank, Greenshank Snipe, Greater Plover, or Green-legged Horseman.

We have here representatives of two genera of the Tattler family, the first being *Himantopus*, or Stiltshank; and the last *Glottis*, or Longshank, a distinction without a difference, as it would seem to the uninitiated: but here is the difference in the words of Macgillivray:—'If one could take a Stiltshank, shorten its wings considerably, and diminish the length of its preposterous looking legs, leaving them still long enough to exceed those of the Tattlers, and add a very small hind toe, he would have a Longshank. Thus it would seem to be as if one were a long-legged man with a spur on his heels, and the other the same upon stilts, and without the spur.'

Let us speak first then of this bird upon the stilts, a long-necked slender-billed fellow, dressed in a suit of black, white, and grey, with a delicate rose flush on the breast, and vermilion feet, and having, too, a greenish gloss on the wings, to heighten his beauty. So slight and apparently fragile is the whole frame of this bird, that we could imagine a puff of wind might blow it away, and dash it to pieces against the rocks; but no, it goes stalking about along the shores of the lakes, and among the marshes; or takes long flights over sea and land, with its red legs trailing behind it like streamers, in perfect safety. Its flight is described as vigorous and regular; in Britain it is a rare occasional visitant, and we know but little of its habits. It is said to be plentiful in many parts of Asia, and the

south-eastern portions of Europe, whence it migrates into Germany, France, and Italy. It feeds on worms and insects, and, according to Temminck, nestles on a small eminence formed in the marshes, laying four eggs of the size and form of those of the Avocet, dull greenish marked with numerous grey spots, and dotted with middle sized and very small spots of a reddish brown. The whole length of the bird itself is about fourteen inches.

The Greenshank is little larger in the body, generally measuring about fifteen inches; it is altogether a better proportioned bird, but its plumage throughout is more uniform and sober, being chiefly grey, brown, and black; it wants the green gloss on the wings, and the roseate tinge on the breast, as well as the bright red legs of the gentleman on stilts, than whom it is seen more frequently in this country, although it is by no means a common species here. During the winter small flocks may sometimes be seen, here and there along the sea shore, and river margins in the north of England, and south of Scotland. In the summer it retires farther northward, and generally leaves Britain in October. It associates in autumn with the Redshank, which it resembles in its habits. Macgillivray describes the hen as extremely shy and vigilant, inasmuch that one can seldom shoot her until after she has deposited her eggs. She is easily discovered, for when perhaps more than a quarter of a mile distant, she rises into the air with clamorous cries, alarming all the birds in the neighbourhood, flies round the place of her nest, now wheeling off to a distance, again advancing, and at intervals alighting by the edge of the lake, when she continues her cries, vibrating her body all the while.

THE DUSKY REDSHANK TATTLER (*Totanus fuscus*).—The Spotted Snipe, or Redshank; the Red-legged, or Cambridge Godwit; the Dusky Sandpiper, Snipe, or Redshank.

THE COMMON REDSHANK TATTLER (*Totanus calidris*). The Redshank, Sandcock, Red-legged, or Fool Snipe.

THE GREEN TATTLER (*Totanus ochropus*).—Sometimes called the Green Sandpiper.

THE WOOD TATTLER (*Totanus glareola*).— Sometimes called the Wood Sandpiper.

These are the true Tattlers—the typical birds of the family—and all the others, if not counterfeits, may be looked upon as ‘poor relations’ only. The variety of names applied to them shows that naturalists are much divided as to the place they should occupy in systems of arrangement. They are called by some Snipes, by others Godwits, by others again, Sandpipers and Redshanks. Linnæus places them, two in his genus *Scolopax*, two in *Tringa*, and other authorities here and there and everywhere; but Macgillivray says *Totanus*, agreeing with Flemming, Selby, Jennings, and others; so *Totanus* let it be. And now for a slight description of this quartette of Tattlers.

The Dusky Redshank, or, as Yarrell calls it, the Spotted Redshank, is a long-billed, slender-legged bird, which sometimes visits this country in the spring, on the way to its breeding grounds in high northern latitudes. It has not then assumed the dark plumage, covered with irregular white spots, from which one of the above names is derived, but has a dress of ash grey and white, with black shadings here and there. The whole length of the adult male is a little over twelve inches, the female is somewhat larger; both have red legs. Of its habits but little appears to be known, although they are no doubt similar to those of other birds of its family. In Europe it has been traced from Scandinavia to Denmark, Holland, France, Spain, and Italy, a naturalist of which last country says, that its short double note resembles the sound of the word *chi-o, chi-o*. Temminck states that this species is found in Bengal, and Gould mentions having received news of it from Asia. American naturalists have not admitted it into the *fauna* of that quarter of the globe.

The Common Redshank has, throughout the year, a plumage which closely resembles the winter dress of the last species, which also it is much like in form. It resides throughout the year in many parts of Britain, being by no means uncommon in Cornwall, Devonshire, and Dorsetshire. Montagu speaks of Rumney Marsh, in Kent, as one of the breeding places of the bird in his time, and it is so now. It is also known to breed in several parts of Scotland, and is found in the more northerly of the English counties, as well

as in Lincolnshire. It is known in the south of France and Italy, and specimens have been received from Tangiers and Trebizond. Mr. Strickland states that it is a common bird on the marshes of Smyrna. Its usual length is about eleven inches; it is a good swimmer, and sometimes perches on trees. According to Montagu, it makes a slight nest of coarse grass near the moist parts or most boggy places in the fens, and begins to lay early in May; the eggs are pale red, or dull white, tinged with green, blotched, spotted, and speckled with dark red brown.

In the marshes of Norfolk and Suffolk, this is said to be the most common kind of wader; it is very troublesome to sportsmen, flying round them, and uttering an incessant shrill whistle, which alarms all the other birds near the spot. Selby says that, when disturbed from its nest, and as long as the young birds are unable to fly, the old ones are very vociferous, and wheel around the intruder in circles, making frequent stoops, as if to strike at the head, like the common Lapwing.

Macgillivray describes this bird as much more vigilant and suspicious than the Sandpipers and Plovers. Its flight is light, rapid, wavering, as if undecided, and being performed by quick jerks of the wings, bears some resemblance to that of a pigeon. It runs with great celerity, and is in every way remarkable for its activity, which becomes almost ludicrous when it is picking up its food on a beach washed by a high surf, its movements being then executed with astonishing rapidity, as it follows the retiring and retreats before the advancing waves.

The Green Tattler, called by Yarrell the Green Sandpiper, is smaller than either of the Tattlers yet described, being little over ten inches in length. Black, greenish brown, and grey of various shades, constitute the colours of the plumage where it is not quite white, as on the breast, under parts of the body and the rump. An elegantly formed bird this, not known to breed with us, although by no means very uncommon during the period of its visit to this country, which extends from about the middle of September to the end of April. Montagu says that it

frequents pools and small shallow streams; is solitary, but sometimes pairs before leaving us; and when disturbed makes a shrill whistling note as it flies. According to Temminck, it is dispersed over the greater part of Europe during its autumn and spring migrations, and nestles in the sand, or among the grass near the water, and lays from three to five eggs of a whitish green, marked with brown spots. Selby, who has met with it in August, says that it runs with great activity, flirting its tail in the same manner as the common Sandpiper. When flushed, it utters a shrill whistle, and generally flies low, skimming over the surface of the water, and following with precision all the bends and angles of the stream.

The Wood Tattler, Yarrell's Wood Sandpiper, is smaller than the last species, which it closely resembles, being about nine inches in length. Macgillivray says that 'this species occurs, accidentally as it were, on the southern and eastern coasts of England, in the course of its autumnal and vernal migrations, and is still less frequently met with than the Green Sandpipers. It is said to be pretty common in the southern and western parts of Europe, but to be seldom met with in France and Germany. I have seen specimens from Northern India, and Mr. Selby says he has some from the Cape of Good Hope.'

The heathy tracks over which are dispersed peat bogs and shallow pools of water, in the southern and eastern parts of Dutch Brabant, are said to be favourite breeding grounds of these birds, whose nest is generally placed at a short distance from the water, among stunted heath, or scrubby plants of the bog myrtle, or among coarse grass and rushes. It is placed in a hollow, and is formed of dry grass and other plants. The eggs are four in number, of a pale greenish white, spotted and speckled with dark reddish brown.

THE WHITE-BREASTED WEET-WEET (*Actitis hypoleucos*), sometimes called the Common Sandpiper, or Summer Snipe; Willy Wicket, Water Junkit, Fiddler.

THE SPOTTED WEET-WEET (*Actitis macularia*), sometimes called the Spotted Sandpiper.

The Weet-Weets closely resemble the Tattlers in their general form and habits; the only noticeable points of difference being that they have shorter bills and feet. They are lively and active birds, with longish slender bodies, necks of moderate length, and small oblong compressed heads. The two above-named are the only members of the genus *Actitis* known in Britain: the first of them, which Yarrell calls the Common Sandpiper, or Summer Snipe, is common, and generally distributed; the last is extremely rare, being an American species, of which a few stragglers sometimes find their way to Europe; we need not, therefore, pause to describe this bird, which, except that it is somewhat smaller, is precisely similar to the more common species, which generally measures about eight inches and a-half in length. The plumage of this latter bird is brown, white, and grey, with a greenish tinge over some parts. It is a summer visitant only, appearing in April, and leaving again about the end of September.

The flight of this species (says Macgillivray) is rapid, and in its course it moves in various directions, somewhat in the manner of the Snipe. When flying over the surface of the water, which it often does so low as almost to touch it with its wings, it now and then spreads out, and bends downwards these organs, keeping them apparently rigid and motionless at intervals, and thus, proceeding by alternate starts, flapping and sailing in a manner peculiar to itself. When resting it keeps the body nearly horizontal, and the legs quite straight, like the Ring Plover, and many other birds of this order. It runs with as much celerity as the Sandpipers, to which it is most intimately allied, but from which it differs in exhibiting the peculiar irritability and mobility of body observed in all the species of this genus.

These birds enliven the solitary shores of the moorland lakes and streams, where they may be seen running with great activity among the beaches, or skimming over the water. In general, however, one is apprised of their presence sooner by the sense of hearing than by that of sight, for they are vigilant and suspicious, and on being alarmed commence their shrill piping, which is continued in the breeding season until the disturber of their quiet takes his departure. They employ the same artifice as the Ring Plover and Dunlin to decoy a person from their nest or young. It is by no means difficult to procure specimens of this species; for although thus suspicious, it conceives itself safe enough at times within shooting distance, or skims past on wing unaware of its danger.

CHAPTER IX.

SNIPES AND WOODCOCKS : — THE COMMON, GREAT, SABINE'S,
AND JACK SNIPES — WOODCOCK.

UNDER the family head *Scolopacinae* are included the Snipes, of which we have four species; and the Woodcocks, of which we have but one.

The Snipes generally may be described as birds of small size, with ovate compact bodies, rather full, moderately long necks, rather small heads, and long flexible bills, which towards the ends are enlarged, compressed, and slightly inclined downwards. They are of more hiding habits than the Tattlers, which frequent open places, and often attract notice by their bold flight and clamorous cries. These birds, on the contrary, seek the retirement and security of swamps and bogs, and grounds where there are ditches and brooks, with their prolific growth of rushes and rank herbage for cover. They seek their food in a quiet sedate manner, and singly; thrusting their long, delicately-sensitive, probe-like bills into the sand or mud, they suck up, as it were, the worms and larvæ, while the bill is yet immersed. They do not appear to pick insects up on the surface, nor to search the open parts, except by night; when alarmed in their retreats, they do not fly up, but generally sit close and motionless.

THE COMMON SNIPE (*Scolopax gallinago*), sometimes called the Moor, or Mire Snipe; the Heather-bliter, Bleater, or Blutter.—This is a bird well known to every English sportsman, who is often foiled in his aim by its zig-zag flight; it is partly an immigrant, and partly a permanent resident, and may be found in almost any part of the country where there are moist and marshy places; its

general weight is from four to five ounces; its length to the end of the tail eleven inches and a-half: it has a bill twice as long as its head, and from the base of the former to the top of the latter passes on each side a broad band of black, slightly variegated with pale red, and separated by a narrow



COMMON SNIPE.

band of reddish white, giving to the bird a very peculiar appearance. Black and brown, with grey dusky and light red tinges and variegations, are the colours of the plumage throughout. The markings, like those of the other species of this family, are very distinct and characteristic, as are also the habits of the birds, of whose haunts Macgillivray gives us this pretty cabinet picture:—

Beautiful are these green woods that hang upon the craggy sides of the furze-clad hills, where the Heath fowl threads its way among the tufts of brown heath, and the Cuckoo sings his ever-pleasing notes as he balances himself on the grey stone, vibrating his fan-like tail. Now I listen to the song of the Mountain Blackbird, warbled by the great lake that spreads its glittering bosom to the sun, wending far away among the mountains, amid whose rocky glens wander the wild Deer, tossing their antlered heads on high as they sniff the breeze tainted by the shepherd and his faithful dog. In that recess, formed by two moss-clad slabs of mica-slate, the lively Wren jerks up its little tail, and chits its merry note, as it recalls its straggling young ones that have wandered among the bushes. From the sedgy slope, sprinkled with white cotton-grass, comes the shrill cry of the solitary Curlew; and there, high over the heath, wings his meandering way the joyous Snipe, giddy with excess of unalloyed happiness.

There, another has sprung from among yellow-flowered marigolds that profusely cover the marsh. Upwards slanting, on rapidly vibrating wings, he shoots, uttering the while his shrill, two-noted cry. *Tissick, tissick*, quoth the Snipe, as he leaves the bog. Now in silence he winds his way, until at length having reached the height of perhaps a thousand feet, he zigzags along, emitting a louder and shriller cry of *zoo-zee, zoo-zee, zoo-zee*; which over, varying his action, he descends, on quivering pinions, curving towards the earth with surprising speed, while from the rapid beats of his wing the tremulous air gives to the ear what at first seems the voice of distant thunder. This noise some have likened to the bleating of a goat at a distance on the hill side, and thus have named the bird the Air-Goat, and Air-Bleater. The sound, I think, is evidently produced by the rapid action of the wings, which, during its continuance, are seen to be in tremulous motion. It comes on the ear soon after the bird commences its descent, and ceases when, having gained the lowest part of the curve, it recovers itself, and ascends with a different and ordinary motion of its wings. I have never heard it under any other circumstances. Were it produced by the voice, it might be emitted when the bird is on the ground, or during its ordinary flight; but should one hear it on the moor, he will invariably find it proceeds from on high. In this manner the Snipe may continue to amuse itself for perhaps an hour or more; and sometimes in the clear sky, one may trace it until it mounts so high as to be no longer perceptible.

This drumming noise of the Snipe commences in April, and is continued through the summer. It is altogether a solitary act, although several individuals may often be heard at the same time, and may be an expression of the happiness of the bird, or an intimation of its presence to its mate while sitting upon her eggs. We have no means of ascertaining its object, nor has it been determined whether it be performed by the male only, or by the female also. When the bird has gone through his evolutions, he descends, often with astounding velocity, on partially extended and apparently motionless wings, diminishes his speed a little as he approaches the ground obliquely, and alights abruptly.

A writer in 'London Society,' who signs himself J. G. W., describing some of the denizens of the New Forest, thus relates his experience of the remarkable sound called 'drumming,' which the Snipe produces; *how* has long been a subject of dispute among naturalists. Although usually thought to resemble the distant roll of the military drum, it is more like, as J. G. W. says, the mingled whiz and hum of a slackened harp string:—

Generally the flight of this bird is short and fitful, as is well known to all sportsmen, and seldom lasts more than a few minutes. But

during the breeding season the Snipe becomes an altered being. Towards evening it leaves its marshy couch, and rises to a great height in the air, where it continues to wheel in circuitous flight for a considerable time, mostly confining itself within the limits of a large circle, and uttering almost continually a loud, sharp, unmusical and monosyllabic cry, which may be roughly imitated by the words, *Chic! chic! chick-a! chick-a! chic! chic! &c.* At varying intervals it sweeps downwards, making a swoop not unlike that of a Hawk, and producing the sound called drumming during the stoop.

How the bird drums has long been a matter of doubt, some naturalists attributing it to the organs of voice, others to the wings, and others to the tail. To set this question at rest was therefore an interesting pursuit, and to that purpose several successive evenings were devoted.

As soon as the Snipes began to drum, we set out for the marshy grounds over which they flew, and by dint of cautious management succeeded in ensconcing ourselves in a dense thicket of thorn and blackberry where we were perfectly concealed, but whence we had a thorough command of the sky. Before we had been long in ambush the desired sound struck on our ears, proceeding from a Snipe that was circling high above us. We watched the bird for a long time, but he never came near enough to give a good view. Several others afforded us as much disappointment, but at last all our trouble was fully repaid. A fine Snipe arose at no great distance, and just as if he had known our object, and intended to give us his best aid, began to cry and drum just over our heads, and at so small a height, that as he wheeled in airy circles, his long beak and bright eyes were clearly seen by the unaided vision, while the double field-glasses with which we were supplied, gave us an excellent view of the bird as if it were within two yards.

It was quite clear that the drumming sound was not produced by the voice, as the bird repeatedly uttered the cry *chic! chic! chick-a!* simultaneously with the drumming. Without offering any opinion, we repeatedly watched the bird, and then compared our observations. They were unanimous, and to the effect that the sound was produced by the quill feathers of the wings. The bird never drummed except when on the swoop, and whenever it performed this manœuvre these quill feathers were always expanded to their utmost width, so that the light could be seen between them, and quivered with a rapid tremulous motion that quite blurred their outlines. Our observations were repeated during several successive evenings, and always with the same result.

The Common Snipe is known to breed in most, if not all, the counties along the southern line of the English coast; but being naturally a breeder in a high northern latitude, its nest is more frequently found in Scotland and

the most northerly parts of the British Isles; it generally consists of a few bits of dead grass or dry herbage, collected in a hollow on the ground, or at the side of a tuft of grass or rushes; the eggs are four in number, of a pale yellowish or greenish white colour, spotted towards the larger end with two or three shades of brown. The nests are found in various situations, often in the grassy pastures, but more frequently in the unfrequented moors. It is thus that Grahame describes one of the selected breeding places of the bird:—

Amid those woodland wilds a small round lake
I've sometimes marked, girt by a springy sward
Of lively green, with here and there a flower
Of deep-tinged purple, firmly stalked, of form
Pyramidal — the shores bristling with reeds,
That midway over wade, and as they bend
Disclose the water-lily, dancing light
On waves soft rippled by the July gale;
Hither the long and soft-billed Snipe resorts,
By suction nourished; here her house she forms;
Here warms her four-fold offspring into life.
Alas! not long her helpless offspring feel
Her fostering warmth; though suddenly she mounts
Her rapid rise, her vacillating flights
In vain defend her from the fowler's aim.

Mudie says:—

The bills of the Snipes are curious organs: they are soft, long, straight, flattened, and slender; blunt at the tip, with the upper mandible larger than the under, and forming a knob on its under side, against which the tip of the lower mandible acts. The nasal grooves extend nearly the whole length of the upper mandible, and the nostrils are narrow longitudinal slits, covered by membranous valves. The bill is copiously supplied with nerves, and highly sentient; and the membrane with which it is invested, and which becomes shrivelled after death, in the same manner as the organs of sensation in all animals are the first to shrink or shrivel, is probably endowed with more than one sense — smells the food in the soft earth, and feels it, after boring down; as the birds bore down upon their prey, whether worm or aquatic insect, and do not dabble along, as if merely guided to it by touch, as many swimming birds are. The form of the head is also peculiar. Its profile is square, and the eyes are placed much further backward than those of most birds, so that they see better laterally than forward, and probably command nearly the

space behind them. Their eyes, not being much wanted in the immediate capture of their prey, are placed so as to guard best against enemies, and to allow the bill to bore into the mud for its whole length. The feet are adapted for walking rather upon soft mud, than upon grassy surfaces, as they have the hinder toe very little produced or extended. They moult twice in the year, but with little difference in the markings, only the tints are richer in the breeding season. From their localities and habits, they enjoy a more uniform temperature than most other land birds.

The food of the Snipe consists of worms, insects, and delicate fibrous roots of plants, as well as minute seeds; these last, perhaps, not picked up designedly, but swallowed while adhering to the glutinous surface of the usual animal food; the bill is, no doubt, a delicate organ of touch, possessing such a degree of sensibility as to enable the bird to detect its prey simply by contact.

I have many times (says Macgillivray) watched the Snipe while feeding by unfrozen rills and in oozy ground, when there was snow on the ground, as well as on ordinary occasions, when, however, it is very difficult to observe it, or when it is met with, to avoid to alarm it. Proceeding in a crouching manner, it thrusts its bill rapidly into the mud, often up to the base, seems to be groping with it for a moment or two, then as rapidly withdraws it, and thus goes on advancing slowly, and making many thrusts in some places, in others moving quickly and making few thrusts. I have never seen it extract anything to be subsequently swallowed, prehension and deglutition being apparently performed while the bill is immersed. It proceeds in silence, and if alarmed stops, crouches close to the ground, sometimes allowing a very near approach; or if in a soft, muddy, or wet place, flying off from a considerable distance.

When obliged to take wing, the bird on rising from the ground utters a shrill cry, which has been likened to a scream; thus Gisborne, who well describes its motions on such occasions, says:—

The Snipe flies screaming from the marshy verge,
And towers in airy circles o'er the wood.
Still heard at intervals; and oft returns
And stoops as bent to alight; then wheels aloft
With sudden fear, and screams and stoops again,
Her favourite glade reluctant to forsake.

The flesh of the Snipe, being delicate and savoury, the bird is much in request in our markets, and is eagerly

sought by sportsmen. In a work entitled 'Shooting Simplified,' by J. D. Dougall, we read of a curious connection between snuff-taking and snipe-shooting:—

The popular belief that a Snipe makes the most difficult of all shots has arisen from its comparative smallness, its sudden rise, and swift corkscrew flight. When shooting Snipes over dogs, the best mode of killing them may be reduced, generally, to two. These two are, either to fire the moment the Snipe rises, or to give it time to get over the tortuous, and resume the direct flight. Thus extremes meet, and one man is a crack shot at Snipe for being very quick, and another quite as crack for being very slow. One of the latter caste manages thus:—Carrying his gun over his shoulder, in the other hand he holds, between finger and thumb, a pinch of snuff. A Snipe rises; with due deliberation he inhales, into each nostril, the titillating grains; down from the shoulder comes the deadly tube; it is levelled, fired, and *Scolopax* is done for. Wonderful analogy discovered by this original thinking philosopher, between the period necessary to take snuff with full enjoyment, and the mode of flight of the poor heather bleater!

Let not our readers suppose that we would encourage a taste for Snipe or any other bird shooting. Rather would we commend to their notice the sentiments with which Bishop Mant concludes his descriptive lines:—

There too, perhaps, although more rare,
While yet the groves their foliage wear,
For till the wintry months draw nigh,
He northward loves a cooler sky,
Recluse in Cambria's humid fells,
Or Scotia's dark and rushy dells,
Or where o'er vale or mountain's head
Green Erin's heathery swamps are spread:
You'll hear remote the feeble pipe
Shrill sounding of the wakeful Snipe,
And catch receding from the view
His spots of black and rusty hue;
As starting from his reedy fen
He flies abrupt the approach of men,
And with quick wing and zigzag flight
Dazzles the unpractis'd fowler's sight.
What others tell, the Muse recites:
For, child of peace, she not delights
The fowler's fellowship to claim,
Nor deals she in the slaughterous game

Content to take for needful food
 The creatures God pronounces good ;
 But not with blood her hands to stain,
 And make a pastime of their pain !



JACK SNIPE.

THE GREAT SNIPE (*Scolopax major*), sometimes called the Solitary, Woodcock, or Double Snipe ; SABINE'S SNIPE (*S. Sabini*) ; and THE JACK SNIPE (*S. Gallinula*).—The first-named of these members of the Snipe family is considerably larger than the common species, weighing from seven to eight ounces, and measuring about twelve inches ; it is a straggling visitor to these islands from high northern latitudes, and never stays to breed with us ; it is said to have a less rapid flight than that of the bird last described, and to rise in silence, flying steadily and heavily, with the tail expanded like a fan, and usually proceeding but a short distance before alighting. The second named is sometimes called the Black Snipe, from the prevalence of dark tints in its plumage, which, owing to the absence of white or reddish yellow, distinguishes it from every other species of this family. But few specimens of this bird have been obtained in England ; one of them was in October 1824, on the banks of the Medway, near Rochester ; eleven inches is about its length.

The third on the list is sometimes called the Juddock ;

it is the smallest of British Snipes, measuring about eight inches and a half. Although not so numerous as to be a common bird with us, yet it is by no means very rare, being generally dispersed throughout Britain from the beginning of October until the end of March.

There are several other British birds, which are often called Snipes, such as the Brown Snipe, described under the head of the Grey Longbeak; but they belong to different families, and are therefore described elsewhere.



WOODCOCK.

THE WOODCOCK (*Scolopax Rusticola*).—The Woodcocks have generally fuller bodies than the Snipes, are larger birds altogether, and their habits are, although essentially similar, yet different in some respects. They inhabit marshy places, moors, and woods; rest for the most part by day, and seek their food by night, in the same manner as the Snipes, by thrusting their long bills into the mud or soft earth. The above-named species is the only one of the genus known as a British bird; it is chiefly a winter visitant, considerable flocks reaching our shores about the end of September, and distributing themselves thence over the inland country. The females are the first to arrive, and they are followed in a few days by the males.

The Woodcock, she who in Norwegian dells,
 Or birchen glades Lapponian, near the swamp
 Sucked from the spongy soil the prey, to cheer
 Her russet young; till winter's icy car
 On summer's step close pressing, from his realm
 Warned her,

says Gisborne, thus indicating the countries from which these migratory birds come, and the season of their south-erly flight. According to Phillips, the early arrival and continued tarriance of these birds in our island ought to be a subject of general thankfulness:—

The Woodcock's early visit, and abode,
 For long continuance in our temperate clime
 Foretells a liberal harvest.

Our old dramatist, Ben Jonson, compares the head and bill of the woodcock to the bowl and stem of a pipe, to which in truth they bear a striking resemblance; and he takes occasion therefrom to give a sly hit at tobacco-smokers. In *Every Man in his Humour*, we find this passage:—

FASTED.—Will your ladyship take any?

SARROLINA.—O peace, I pray thee! I love not
 The breath of the Woodcock's head.

FAS.—Meaning my head, lady?

SAR.—Not altogether so, sir; but as it were fatal
 To their follies that think to grace themselves with
 Taking tobacco, when they want better entertainment;
 You see your pipe bears the true form of a Woodcock's head.

FAS.—O rare similitude!

Besides the more regular and sportsman-like way of shooting Woodcocks, they are often taken in snares and gins; and were so, we may suppose, in Beaumont and Fletcher's time; for in their play of *Wit without Money*, they make Isabella allude to the practice:—

Oh Cupid!

What pretty gins thou hast to *halter* Woodcocks!

Knox, in his 'Game Birds and Wild Fowl,' gives a detailed account of the mode of setting one of these hanging gins, as set up by an old poacher, and a spirited illustration

of the bird so caught by the neck. The colours of the Woodcock's plumage are generally sober and subdued, like those of the Partridge; but their general harmony, and the grace and delicacy of the pencillings, render it as beautiful a bird as it is a highly valued one for the table; seldom does it weigh more than twelve ounces, and yet a brace will commonly fetch six or seven shillings. Ireland is the great shooting ground for Woodcocks, that is as far as Great Britain is concerned; and there also will the Snipe-shooter meet with the largest measure of success.

M. Lesson says, 'The ordinary flight of the Woodcock is moderately quick, sedate, and unlike that of the Snipe, which is rapid, undulated, and performed with quick beats of the wing. It walks with ease, and on occasions quickly, but is not addicted to running or much wading, although it readily goes into the water; the common earthworm appears to be its favourite food, although it eats all kinds of insects, slugs, and other small animals. The nest is placed in various situations, sometimes in woods about the margins of thickets, sometimes in open places. It is a slight hollow, lined with small twigs and leaves; the eggs, four in number, are of a blunt pear shape, yellowish white, clouded and spotted with grey and reddish brown or dusky. Considerable numbers breed in Scotland, and also in England, but not so many. A Woodcock's nest in this country was once considered to be a wonderful thing; but it is not so now, for so many instances have occurred that there can be no doubt it is a permanent resident with us.'

'Rusticus,' of Godalming, says:—

Woodcocks frequently breed with us. I recollect meeting with young ones on many occasions. Once in particular I remember putting up an old hen and three young ones, two-thirds grown, when rabbit shooting in a field called the 'fourteen acres,' adjoining Munstead farm, and belonging to the Milford estate. We have two kinds of Woodcock, the little black cock, which is comparatively rare, and the large pale cock, which is common. I have always supposed the little black cock to be the male, and the other the female; but I have no evidence of this, and our best sportsmen think differently, and urge the difference in number, which is as fifty to one, the difference in size, which is as great as between a full Snipe and a Jack, the difference in colour, and a difference in the comparative length of the beak and shank.

Bishop Mant thus describes the retreats of the Woodcock :—

There too the bird you'll haply find,
 Of larger size, congenial kind,
 Fresh from the Baltic's sounding shores,
 Perchance from Scotland's hills and moors,
 From Grampian heights and Moray's shades,
 To sojourn in our southern glades.
 The marsh his nightly haunt: the *Wood*
 Within its secret solitude,
 Which on the kind their *name* bestows,
 Supplies their place of day's repose,
 Where moss-grown runnels oozing well
 Through bushy glen or hollow dell.
 There rest they, till the closing day
 The signal gives to seek their prey,
 Where the long worm and shrouded fly,
 Close in their marshy burrows lie:
 Then issue forth by nature's power,
 To banquet through the midnight hour,
 Till the grey dawn their ardour daunt,
 And warn them to their woodland haunt.
 Mysterious power! which guides by night,
 Through the dark wood the illumin'd sight,
 Which prompts them by the unerring smell
 The appointed prey's abode to tell,
 Bore with long bill the investing mould,
 And feel, and from the secret hold
 Dislodge the reptile spoil! But who
 Can look creation's volume through,
 And not fresh proofs at every turn
 Of the *Creator's* mind discern,
 The end to which his actions tend;
 The means adapted to the end;
 The reasoning thought; the effective skill;
 And, ruling all, the Almighty's will?

CHAPTER X.

STALKERS — BITTERNS AND HERONS : — THE EUROPEAN, AMERICAN, LITTLE, AND SQUACCO BITTERNS — THE NIGHT, GREY, AND PURPLE HERONS — THE BLACK-BILLED, YELLOW-BILLED, LITTLE WHITE, AND BUFF-BACKED EGRETS.

WE now enter upon an order of birds called *Aucupatores*, or Stalkers, which differ very widely from the lively and rambling *Tentatorial* birds, or Probers, in their movements and general habits. Many of them are of large size, some small, but mostly of moderate dimensions ; they have all very long legs, and they walk in a sedate and not ungraceful manner. They wade far into the water, and often stand for hours motionless on the watch for prey. Their flight is light and buoyant, but usually slow, although they are enabled to perform long journeys, being all more or less migratory birds. Very few permanently reside in Britain ; but many species occur here as regular visitants or occasional stragglers. As a rule, they are shy and suspicious birds, flying before the approach of man, or concealing themselves closely among the herbage. They form large, flat, slovenly nests upon the ground, or the forked branches of trees, and lay from two to five light-coloured eggs. In tropical countries they are much more numerous than in temperate regions. Their favourite haunts are the sea-shores, borders of rivers and lakes, and they feed chiefly on fishes, reptiles, crustacea, and other aquatic animals.

THE BITTERNS constitute the first genus of the Heron family, and they are distinguished by the scientific name *Botaurus*, on account of the booming or bellowing kind of noise

which the males emit, *taurus* in Latin signifying a bull. They are generally distinguished from the other birds of the family by the extreme compression of their bodies and heads, shorter legs, with proportionably longer claws, and great elongation of the feathers of the neck, which behind is bare nearly its whole length; their oblong extremely compressed heads, and very slender, straight bills. They reside in marshy places, by the side of lakes and streams, and are very retired in their habits, seldom showing themselves on the open ground or during the day. Their young remain in the nest until fledged.

THE EUROPEAN BITTERN (*Botaurus stellaris*), sometimes called the Common Bittern, Miredrum, Bumpy-coss, Butter-bump, Bitterbum, Bog Bumper, Bumble.—THE AMERICAN BITTERN (*B. lentiginosus*), sometimes called the Freckled Heron.—THE LITTLE BITTERN (*B. minutus*), sometimes called the Boonk, or Long-neck.—THE SQUACCO BITTERN (*B. comatus*).



COMMON BITTERN.

The above are the four species of Bitterns known as British birds; all are now rare, although the first is said to have been at one time abundant in most of the marshy districts of Britain. It has a variety of curious popular names,

referring to the boggy places which it frequents, or to the singular noise which it utters, generally in the hours of silence and darkness; these show that it was once a bird well known, by its voice, at all events, to the common people. It has a plumage of a pale dull yellow, with black markings, and rust-coloured patches and shades, especially about the wings; the fullness of the feathers about the neck give to the bird a grotesque appearance, which, no doubt, has something to do with the odd names by which it is called. There is scarcely any tail, and the legs are set far back, so that it looks as if the creature must topple forward upon its beak, which is finer and sharper than that of the Heron. The legs are of a pale green colour, and the claws long and slender, the inside of the middle one being serrated, or toothed like a saw, for the better holding of its slippery prey, such as small fish, frogs, and lizards, from the Latin name of which kind of reptile, *stella*, the bird derives its specific title, *stellaris*. The French call it *Eau-mère*, that is, Water-mother, from the moist places which it frequents.

Selby says that the nest of the Bittern is composed of sticks, reeds, &c., and that it is generally placed on the ground near the water's edge, among the thickest herbage; the eggs are four or five in number, of an even pale brown colour, uniform in shape at both ends; the young are produced in about twenty-five days, and are fed by the parents until fully fledged. Yarrell says that he can only refer to three recent instances of Bitterns breeding in this country; from which, no doubt, the draining of marshes and cultivation of extensive bogs and waste lands, by depriving them of congenial haunts, have gradually driven them. Gould observes, that although not absolutely rare birds, yet their presence is not always to be reckoned on, for in one year they may be tolerably common, and then for several successive years not procurable at all. In the time of Henry VIII. they were in great esteem at the tables of the great, their flesh being considered in flavour like that of the hare.

Although a hideling and a fugitive from man, the Bittern is, when attacked, a bold and even ferocious bird, striking with its sharp bill at the eyes of its assailant. If wounded,

it often makes a desperate resistance, against both dog and man, sometimes laying upon its back and fighting with both claws and bill, the former of which has been known to inflict a wound on the leg through the boot.

It is during the months of February and March chiefly that the males make that curious lowing, or bellowing sound, which is called the *booming* of the Bittern. Some suppose this to be the call to the females, and say it is produced by a loose membrane, situated in the throat, which is capable of great extension, and can be filled with air and exploded at pleasure. The noise was formerly believed to be made while the bird plunged its bill into the mud: hence Thomson writes:—

So that scarce
The Bittern knows his time, with bill engulfed,
To shake the sounding marsh.

In Scripture this was the bird of desolation; thus Isaiah, prophesying the destruction of Babylon, says:—‘The Lord will make it a possession for the Bittern, and pools of water.’ Well may Dilnot Sladden, in his poem ‘The Spirit of Beauty,’ say:—

Where now
Is Babylon the gorgeous? Fallen for ever
In ruin and confusion; there remains
The mouldering temple, and the falling tower,
In mighty heaps, where scarce the Arab dares
To pitch his habitation; where the beasts
Have found their dens, and by the water pools
The *Bittern* makes his dwelling; and the words
Which Heaven spake by the prophet are fulfilled,
E’en to the letter.

Mudie has given us a graphic picture of the home of the Bittern, which, although long, we are tempted to quote:—

A calm clear day in the wilderness. * * * The dry height is silent, save the chirp of the grasshopper, or the hum of some stray bee which the heat of the day has tempted out, to see if there be any honeyed blooms among the heath; by-and-by you hear the warning whistle of the Plover, sounded perhaps within a few yards of your feet, but so singularly inward a ventriloque, that you fancy it comes from miles off; the Lapwing soon comes at the call, playing and wailing around your head, and quits you not till you are so near the marshy expanse that your footing is heavy, and the ground quakes and vibrates under your feet. That is not much to be

heeded, if you keep the line of the rushes, for a thick tuft of these sturdy plants makes a safe foot-fall in any bog. You may now, perhaps, start the Twite, which will utter its peevish chirp, and jerk off; and if there be a stream with banks of some consistency, you may see the more lively Wagtail, which will jerk and run, and flirt about, as if showing off for your especial amusement. Should there be a wide portion of clear water, you may perhaps see the Wild Duck with her young brood sailing out from among the reeds, like a vessel of war leading the fleet which she protects; or if the pool is smaller, you may see the brown and yellow of the Snipe gliding through the herbage on the margin, as if it were a snake in the grass. Not a wing will stir, however, or a creature take much heed of your presence, after the Lapwing wails her farewell.

In the tuft of tall and close herbage, not very far from the firm ground, but yet so placed near or in the water that you cannot very easily reach it, the Bittern may be close at the time, wakeful, noting you well, and holding herself prepared to 'keep her castle;' but you cannot raise her by shouting, or even by throwing stones, the last of which is treason against nature, in a place solely under Nature's dominion. Wait till the sun is down, and the last glimmer of the twilight has got westward of the zenith, and then return to the place where you expected to find the bird.

The reeds begin to rustle with the little winds, in which the day settles accounts with the night; but there is a shorter and a sharper rustle, accompanied by the brush of rather a powerful wing. You look round the dim horizon, but there is no bird: another rustle of the wing, and another, still weaker and weaker, but not a moving thing between you and the sky around. You feel rather disappointed — foolish, if you are daring; fearful, if you are timid. On, on, a burst of uncouth and savage laughter breaks over you, piercingly, or rather gratingly loud, and so unwonted and odd, that it sounds as if the voices of a bull and horse were combined, the former breaking down his bellow to suit the neigh of the latter, in mocking you from the sky.

This is the love-song of the Bittern, with which he serenades his mate; and uncouth and harsh as it sounds to you, that mate hears it far sooner than she would hear the sweetest chorus of the grove; and when the surprise with which you are at first taken is over, you begin to discover that there is a sort of modulation in the singular sound. As the bird utters it he wheels in a spiral, expanding his voice as the loops widen, and sinking it as they close; and though you can just dimly discover him between you and the zenith, it is worth while to lie down on your back, and watch the style of his flight, which is as fine as it is peculiar. The sound comes better out, too, when you are in that position; and there is an echo, and, as you would readily imagine, a shaking of the ground; not that, according to the tale of the poets, the bird thrusts his bill into the marsh, and shakes that with his booming, though (familiar as I once

was for years with the sound, and all the observable habits of Bitterns), some kindly critic, on a former occasion, laboured to convert me from that heresy. A quagmire would be but a sorry instrument even for a Bittern's music; but when the Bittern booms and bleats over head, one certainly feels as if the earth were shaking; but it is probably nothing more than the general affection of the sentimental system by the jarring upon the ear—an affection which we more or less feel in the case of all harsh and grating sounds, more especially when they are new to us.

Macgillivray, who quotes the latter portion of this, doubts whether it was the cry of the Bittern which Mudie really heard, and expresses a belief that it was the drumming of the Snipe; but as he confesses that he never himself heard the Bittern's boom, and as Mudie asserts his perfect familiarity with it, we take the account as it stands as correct.

There are few captures of Bitterns recorded to have taken place in Britain of late years: the latest we have seen mentioned is that in the following newspaper paragraph, bearing date 1856:—‘A fine specimen of the male Bittern, a bird becoming very rare in this part of the country, was shot at Diglis, near the locks on the Severn, on Saturday. The bird was in fine plumage, and measures three feet four inches across the wings, and in length from the top of the bill to the feet, three feet two inches.’

We must now present in a group the three other species of Bitterns whose names occur at p. 152.

THE AMERICAN BITTERN closely resembles the common species in form; it is of smaller size, and very dissimilar in colouring, which is darker, being mostly of a rich brown, shaded with black and chestnut, and very prettily freckled. Only three or four specimens have been taken in this country; it is a bird well known to American naturalists, and Dr. Richardson says it is common in the marshes and willow thickets in the interior of the fur countries, up to the fifty-eighth parallel. Its loud booming, exactly resembling that of the Common Bittern of Europe, may be heard every summer evening, and also frequently in the day. When disturbed it utters a hollow croaking cry. The North American Indians term it *Mokoko*, probably an imitation of one of its cries.

THE LITTLE BITTERN is the smallest example of the family to which it belongs, the whole length being about thirteen inches: buff and black are its prevailing colours, which are not mingled so much as in the other species, but in distinct patches. Many examples have been taken in this country; but our naturalists know little of its habits from actual observation. It is a native of the western parts of Europe, the south-western parts of Asia, and probably of a large portion of Africa; as is also the Squacco Bittern, or Squacco Heron, as it is as frequently called; a very beautiful bird, of a delicate buff, shaded with brown and white, of which a few specimens have been obtained here; it is about nineteen inches in length.

THE NIGHT HERON (*Nycticorax Gardeni*), sometimes called the Night Raven.—In the restricted genus *Nycticorax* (which term is the Latin for Night Crow), we have a sort of connecting link between the Bitterns and true Herons; this genus includes the Night Herons, of which the above is the single British representative; they are generally of a more robust form and more active habits than the other Herons.

The bird just named is about twenty-three inches in length. The plumage on the upper parts is black, or nearly so, glossed with green; and on the under parts white and ash grey. Like the Bitterns it inhabits marshy places, hiding by day, and stealing forth at night to feed on reptiles, fishes, and aquatic insects, which it swallows whole; it builds in trees, and lays four pale green or blue eggs, rather more than two inches in length. This bird was named *Gardeni* in honour of Dr. Garden, of South Carolina; Dr. Latham called it the Spotted Heron, from the elongated white spots on the wings of the young bird. This species has a wide geographical range, being found in Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America, most plentifully in the warmer parts. With us it is a rare visitant.

THE GREY HERON (*Ardea cinerea*), sometimes called the Common or Crested Heron, or Heronshaw.—THE PURPLE HERON (*A. purpurea*).—These birds are the only British representatives of the genus *Ardea*—the Herons properly so called—which are among the larger and

more robust species of the family to which they give name. The last named is a very rare species in this country, and a most beautiful bird, having a plumage of bluish black, or purple; buff of various shades, chestnut, grey, maroon colour, nicely shaded and intermixed so as to produce an effect at once rich and chaste. The length from the back to the tail is about twenty-nine inches; the form is slender and graceful. Altogether, about a dozen specimens of this bird have been taken in Britain. It is a native of the temperate and warmer parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa; feeding, like its congener, on small animals, reptiles, fishes, and aquatic insects; and haunting morasses and marshy swamps, where it makes its nest on the ground, laying three eggs of a pale green colour, about two inches and a quarter long.



COMMON HERON.

The Common Heron is an awkward-looking bird as to shape, with a large head and bill, set upon a snaky neck, that usually with the high-humped back forms a curve like the letter S; the long legs are set far back in the body, the feet and claws are large, and the tail very short. The prevailing colour of the plumage is grey, at parts deepening into dark slate colour, and bluish black, or fading off into white, which is, however, nowhere without an admixture

of grey, in the form of streaks or elongated spots. The feathers which cover the wings are long and silky, as are those of a tuft which depends from the lower part of the neck covering the breast, and the slate-coloured crest-feathers flow back so far as nearly to touch the neck at its connection with the shoulders; a strange shy bird, ungraceful in its movements, with a harsh voice, and to man, unsocial habits; it will stand for hours in the water with its head drawn close in, ready to dart upon its finny or slimy prey, and transfix it with its sharp beak. A real hermit of the woods and streams, consorting not even with its own kith and kin, except during the breeding season, when it becomes lively, noisy, and gregarious, forming those communities of birds called Heronries, which were once guarded and preserved with jealous care for the sake of the sport which they afforded in hawking, and which still exist in many parts of the country, although the royal game of hunting Herons to death with trained Hawks and Falcons has happily fallen into disuse.

Heronry, says a recent writer in the "Illustrated London News," is a word closely associated in the mind of a genuine Londoner with regions indefinitely distant, or scenes of palatial grandeur strange to the present age. But these imaginations originate in his not knowing a hawk from a heronshaw. Heronries are still close neighbours of the metropolis; and the gallant "Heron-sewy" may often be seen traversing the ocean of the London smoke. We have been led into these remarks, by what, *to ourselves*, was a discovery — the existence of a small but very complete heronry in the venerable park of Cobham, near Gravesend. Walking, on a recent summer's day near the beautiful forest which begirts the mausoleum of the Darnleys, in that sylvan region, we were startled by the loud, yelping cry peculiar to the *Ardeida*, and, to our surprise, discovered, immediately over head, a busy colony of genuine "three year olders" busily employed in tending their voracious families. The antiquity of the place, and the baronial importance of the Cobhams, were at once determined things. The sword of De Warrene, despite the proximity of Gravesend, could not have more quickly settled the question. Visions of "merrie Englande" passed before us. We thought of the days when an Archbishop of York graced his table with 400 heronshawes; and of the years, too, in which the week's wages of the architect of Windsor Castle and the price of a single heron were represented by the same coin — a twelpenny piece for the builder, and a twelve for the bird. The brave courtings, also, in which the catching of a

Heron and the catching of a lady's heart were things coincident, added colour to our reminiscence. Things were felt to be changed; while the birds remained the same—albeit chased no more, and at peace.

With us this bird is one of the most numerous, as well as the best known of the order of waders, and formerly in the palmy days of falconry the places where it bred were held almost sacred; the bird was considered royal game, and penal statutes were enacted for its preservation; now it is little cared for, but has to depend upon its own sagacity for sustenance and safety. It is a great glutton, swallowing its food whole, and when successful in its fishing, in great quantities, as the following newspaper paragraph will testify:—‘There was found dead lately, on the banks of the Pulganny, *alias* the water of Bladenoch, near Drumalmford House, a craigy Heron, the stomach of which, when examined, actually contained the amazing number of thirty-nine fine burn trouts.’ On one occasion, as we learn by the following story, by its voracity this silent fisher came to grief:—

The old fisherman one day related to us a curious anecdote of a heron. Pulling quietly down the lake one morning in a boat with one of his sons to look at the trimmers he had set over night, he was struck by the unusual circumstance of seeing a heron rise from the water, reach a certain height, and then suddenly fall to the water again; this was repeated two or three times before they reached the spot, and accompanied by much struggling, and the cries peculiar to the bird. When they came to the place they found that the heron was hooked, and that a fine pike, of about five or six pounds weight, lay on the surface of the water at the head of the trimmer. Taking hold of the line, they began to haul the bird in, but the nearer it came the greater its struggles and cries; and at last it attacked the son, striking him on the side of the head with its long beak, and drawing blood. However, it was in time secured and brought away alive. It appears that the heron had struck the fish after it had taken the bait, and in eating it had extricated the bait to which the hook was fixed, and swallowed both together. Rising on the wing to escape, it could reach no further than the length of the line, and was consequently forced back again.

Cuvier, in his ‘Animal Kingdom,’ gives this account of the habits of the Erns, as they are called in most rural districts:—

The Heron seeks everywhere the neighbourhood of lakes, of rivers, and of lands intersected by water. Almost always solitary, it remains, for hours together, immovable in the same spot. When it puts itself in motion to watch, upon their passage, and more nearly, the frogs and fishes, which constitute its chief aliment, it enters into the water above the knee, with its head between the legs, and in this position, after having patiently awaited the moment of seizing its prey, it suddenly unfolds its long neck, and pierces its victim with its bill. It has been ascertained that it swallows frogs entire, for their bones are found in its stomach unbroken. In time of dearth, and when the water is covered with ice, it approaches running streams, and hot springs, where it is said to feed on the water-lentil, and other small plants. But it frequently exposes itself to perish, rather than seek a milder climate. In the different seasons of the year, it constantly appears so melancholy and insensible, that it will remain alone and exposed in the worst weather, on some stump in the midst of an inundated meadow, while the blongios (a smaller kind of heron) takes shelter in the thick herbage, and the bittern in the midst of the reeds.

The Herons, which unite to their sad and uniform existence all the torments of perpetual fear and inquietude, are not accustomed to take flight, except at night, and for the purpose of betaking themselves into the woods of thick and lofty foliage in the neighbourhood, and from which they return before the dawn of day. Then it is that their sharp and unpleasant scream is heard, which might be compared to that of a goose, were it not shorter and more melancholy. In the day-time, they fly away to a great distance from the sight of man, and when attacked by the eagle or the falcon, they endeavour to escape by rising into the air, and getting above them. The wings of the heron strike the air in an equal and regulated motion, and this uniform flight raises and carries its body to such an elevation, that, at a distance, nothing is perceptible except the wings, which are at length lost sight of in the region of the clouds.

A correspondent of the 'Magazine of Natural History,' in a list of birds that were collected near Dartford in Kent, mentions the following extraordinary fact:—'*Ardea major*, Heron. A fine full-plumaged bird. I particularly enumerate this bird (which was run down by a boy, and captured on Bexley marshes) from finding in his stomach a *very large-sized, mature male water-rat*. It had been lately swallowed, occupying even to distension (with portions of partly-digested fish) the ventricles of the Heron. The only apparent injury to the animal was a puncture, made by the beak of the bird, in the frontal part of the skull, by which the life was destroyed.'

At the breeding season the Herons resemble the Rooks in many of their habits, building, as those birds do, in high trees, generally upon large oaks and tall firs, associating in great numbers, and occupying the same spots, and even the same trees, year after year. Pennant mentions having counted more than eighty nests in one oak at Cressy Hall, near Spalding, in Lincolnshire. The large loose nests too, which these birds make, resemble those of the Rook; they are formed of sticks, and lined with wool. The female lays four or five eggs of a uniform sea-green colour; incubation lasts about twenty-eight days: the young birds are supplied by their parents with food until they are able to fly and provide for themselves. Sometimes Herons build in precipitous rocks near the coast, as at South Stack lighthouse, near Holyhead, and occasionally on the ground among reeds and rushes, but mostly, as we have said, it is upon tall trees, generally in rural districts and retired spots, where, as Bishop Mant tells us:—

Their broad floors the Heron makes
On wooded isle and inland lakes,
Aloft a congregated town;
Where in the spare twigs nestling down,
Hangs clinging from the peopled bough
Their dull green length of leg.

In illustration of one of the traits of this bird's character, viz., cowardice, we quote the following from 'Wayside Notes on British Birds,' in 'Chambers' Journal':—

One of the largest of the wild birds frequenting the woods and streams of the North of England is the Heron, whose heavy wing and great length of neck and bill, ought, one would think, to make it a most formidable antagonist to any feathered foe. And yet there is scarcely any other bird that excites the animosity of the Rook more, nor one which he will attack with greater virulence. I was one day deeply interested in the efforts made by a large Heron, sailing heavily through the air, with its long legs trailing behind like the ropes from a ship's stern, to escape from an angry Rook, that followed it pertinaciously. As it could not hope to escape by flight, being a slow though stately flyer, it at last took ignominious refuge in a ditch. The Rook then perched itself in a branch of an overhanging tree, and immediately began *caw cawing*, which had evidently more in it than met the *human* ear; for a couple of dusky friends, far on their way to the neighbouring feeding field, turned

abruptly round, and flew straight back to their acquaintance in the tree. The three then set up a trio of abuse, that was more than birdish flesh and blood could bear, for the foolish fisher once more rose upon the wing. No sooner was it fairly under weigh, than its tormentor instantly followed in pursuit, aided most willingly by the two recruits, who joined in the sport with singular alacrity. In vain the Heron swerved and doubled—in vain it lifted up its most unearthly voice and shrieked—for as far as the eye could see, the chase continued, one on each side, and one behind, like three small policemen conducting a big reeling navvy to the station-house.

I remember a story that used to be current in my early days, which would always command my youthful attention. It was of a great conflict, which has found no mention in Professor Creasy's work on the decisive battles of the world, but which, in its way, was quite as decisive as Marathon or Waterloo. This engagement was between an army of Rooks on the one hand, and an army of Herons on the other, for the right of possession to certain fine trees, which, as the papers say of waste land, constituted a very eligible site for building purposes. After the combat had raged for a long time—two or three days—and the ground had been thickly strewn with the dead and dying, the Herons began to shew the white feather, and were at last driven off, leaving the victorious Rooks masters of the coveted situation.

In that most interesting little volume, entitled the 'Marvels and Mysteries of Instinct,' we find this illustration:—

We shall stop to notice one instinct only of this bird, and that is one not a little wonderful in its character. It is generally known that fish are alarmed at shadows upon the water, especially at those in motion; but this is the case more particularly with the trout and salmon tribes. They dislike to approach a shadow at rest; but when disturbed by one in motion they dart away as if with fright into the deep, and return to the spot only after a lengthened period. Now the Heron seems familiar with the habits of such fish, and shapes her conduct accordingly; for she fishes only in the absence of the sun, when there can be no shadow to frighten away her prey.

Such being the case, this 'bird alights in a quiet way, then wades into the water to its depth, folds its long neck partially over its back, and forward again, and with watchful eye awaits till a fish comes within reach of its beak. Instantaneously it darts, and the prey is secured.' It is not surely from knowledge that the Heron fishes at the right time; for, if so, she must obtain it by experience, and this is, we think, a task too much beset with difficulties for this or any other bird to accomplish. If the old ones only did it, and the younger not, the supposition might be entertained; but the great probability is that all act alike, and that the young adopt the practice with as much readiness and apparent sagacity as the oldest and most

experienced among them. We put it down, then, as the marvellous working of an instinct—an instinct most admirably adapted to the circumstances of the necessary method made use of by the Heron to obtain the means of subsistence.

But there is another characteristic in the habits of the Heron's fishing that makes the fact still more particular and marked. On occasions when a river has inundated the marshes and plains of its basin, and the floods have subsided, leaving here and there some pools of water with fish in them, which have not been able to return with the volume of the rolling element, then it is that the Herons fish in sun and shade indiscriminately, as if they felt quite positive that the alarm caused by a shadow could be of no consequence, since it was no longer possible for their prey to escape them. The fish are in peril, and the Herons, seemingly aware of it, pounce upon them without taking that peculiar precaution which characterises their manner of doing it in other and ordinary circumstances. 'How,' says the writer in the 'British Naturalist,' 'the Herons find out these occasions it is difficult to say; but we have seen several pairs come after a flood to a river, which they never visited on any other occasion, and within many miles of which a Heronry, or even the nest of a single pair, was never observed.'

Jesse, in his 'Gleanings,' says:—'It has been supposed that a light is emitted by Herons from their breasts as they stand in the water of an evening, wading for fish. I should like to be assured of the accuracy of this supposition.' In answer to this, J. H. F., a contributor to the 'Mirror,' observes:—'I have never met with any statement, either conjectural or positively made, respecting such a circumstance, as regards the Heron; but it is asserted by the best naturalists, that the breast of the Great American Bittern emits a powerful light, which has been considered of service to it in finding its prey at night time. Perhaps Mr. Jesse may have confounded this fact with the Heron.' None of the authorities whom we have consulted allude to this notion of a luminous breast as belonging to either bird, and we should take it to be one of the fables with which all works on natural history are rife; it may be, that the silvery white and silky grey plumage of the Heron may cast a sort of sheen, or reflection as of faint light, on the water by which it stands; but we cannot think that this is sufficiently strong to attract the fish to the spot, and so bring them within reach of its bill, or to enable the feathered fisher to discern its prey amid the surrounding gloom.

Many passages might we quote from the poets, and many interesting facts relate, in reference to this singular bird; but we have already given to it a larger portion of our space than is due. One poetical picture we must include, and that is from Bishop Mant's 'British Months':—

O'er yonder lake the while,
 What bird about that wooded isle
 With pendant feet, and pinions slow,
 Is seen his ponderous length to row?
 'Tis the tall Heron's awkward flight,
 His crest of black, and neck of white,
 Far sunk his grey blue wings between,
 And giant legs of murky green.
 His tribe is seaward, far away;
 And he remains, as peasants say,
 About their summer haunts to dwell,
 On guard, a faithful sentinel:
 Till spring again with genial smile
 Recall them to their native isle,
 On their lov'd oak's wide-spreading crown
 Aloft to build their close-set town,
 Their brood to hatch, their younglings rear,
 Then monished hence as now to steer
 Far off their migratory way,
 For richer floods and ampler prey.
 So without words, by secret sign,
 Speaks to their sense the voice divine!

THE BLACK-BILLED EGRET (*Egretta nigrirostris*).—THE YELLOW-BILLED WHITE EGRET (*E. alba*), sometimes called the Great White Heron.—THE LITTLE WHITE EGRET (*E. garzetta*).—THE BUFF-BACKED EGRET (*E. russata*).

The birds here grouped together are all the British members known of the fourth genus of the Heron family. Being but rare and occasional visitants to these islands, a very short account of them will suffice. Let us premise, that the Egrets differ from the true Herons chiefly in being of a more slender form, and in having the neck and legs greatly elongated. The first of the above-named birds is superior in size to the common Heron, being about forty-four inches in length: in form it is a much more graceful and elegant bird; the snowy plumage is relieved by the black bill and flesh-coloured feet. But a

single specimen of this bird has been obtained in Britain, and there appears some doubt as to whether that might not have been identical with the second-named species, although Macgillivray thinks not.

The White Heron, as this latter bird is often called, appears to be white with black feet, and a yellow bill; length about forty inches. Five or six is, we believe, the total number of specimens of this species of Heron taken in Britain.

The Little White Egret is one of the most charming members of its family, of which, also, it is one of the smallest, being about twenty-four inches in length; it, too, has white plumage with a black bill. 'That this bird was formerly common here, appears by some of the old bills of fare; in the famous feast by Archbishop Neville we find no less than a thousand *Asterides*, *Egrittes* or Egrets, as it is variously spelled. Probably the esteem in which they were held as table delicacies caused their extirpation. Abroad they are still common, especially in the southern parts of Europe, where they appear in flocks.' Thus says Pennant as quoted by Yarrell, who mentions eight or nine specimens taken here since 1792.

The last of the four above-named is about twenty inches long; and its delicately white plumage is tinged at the fore part of the breast and back with cream colour, the bill is pale yellow, the feet dusky yellow. The claim of this bird to admission to the British fauna rests on a single specimen: it was shot in Devonshire in October, 1805.



WHITE STORK.

CHAPTER XI.

STORKS, &c. : — THE WHITE AND BLACK STORKS — GLOSSY
IBIS — WHITE SPOONBILL.

THE WHITE STORK (*Ardea* or *Ciconia alba*). — THE
BLACK STORK (*A.* or *C. niger*).

The Storks, which comprise the fifth genus of the Heron family, and are called by Macgillivray and some other naturalists by the generic name *Ciconia*, are birds of more robust make, and generally of larger size, than the true Herons; they have long and rather thick necks, long and slender legs, with comparatively short toes, having curved and obtuse claws. They belong chiefly to the warmer climates of the old continent, where they reside mostly in marshy places, feeding on fishes, frogs, lizards, and sometimes small quadrupeds and birds. Some of the species are of gigantic size, and these are omnivorous feeders, like vultures, eating dead animals and any kind of garbage, as well as vegetable substances. Some perform very extensive migrations, flying in continuous or irregular lines, and chiefly at night. Some nestle on the ground, others on high trees or buildings. They lay three or four eggs, of an elliptical shape, and light colour.

The previously-named are the only species which have ever been taken in England, and these but very rarely. The length of the first of them is about forty-two inches, and of the second about thirty-eight inches. This last has plumage mostly of a brownish-black colour, glossed with purple and green; the breast and abdomen being white, the bill and feet red. The plumage of the first is altogether white, the bill and feet being much like those of the black species.

It is not in Britain that the habits of either of these birds can be studied, their occurrence being confined to but few instances. Continental writers inform us that in the temperate parts of Europe they arrive near the end of spring, and leave in October, proceeding in large flocks, and betaking themselves to Africa and Asia. Being great destroyers of reptiles, they are welcomed wherever they go, and suffered to build and breed unmolested, so that they become quite familiar and fearless of man, frequently residing in towns, and making their large flat nests—composed externally of sticks and twigs, and internally of straws and dry herbage—upon the chimneys and other elevated parts of buildings. There the three or four eggs, of a greenish-white colour, are laid; and they and the young birds are so carefully tended by the parents, that the Stork has become an emblem of parental love.

In an article on these birds which appeared in 'Chambers's Journal,' quite recently, we read:—

It is curious to note in what high repute Storks have been held from the very earliest ages. Their Hebrew name (Chasedah or Chaseedah) signifies 'pious,' or 'benevolent,' and both among the Greeks and Romans the Stork was the emblem of filial piety, of chastity, of conjugal fidelity, and of gratitude—'too many virtues, alas!' says a French ornithologist, 'for a single bird.' Most of our readers have heard what the ancients believed concerning the filial affection of storks—how that when the parents grew old, and incapable of feeding themselves, the young birds brought them food, and waited on them with all possible tenderness, even taking them on their backs and giving them a ride through the air; hence the law, attributed to Solon, by which children were bound to support their parents in old age, was called the Pelagian or Stork law. It is certain that Storks possess an unusual degree of affection for their young, and according to Buffon, some instances have been observed of birds who were unable to fly, either from weakness or accidental

injury, being fed by their stronger companions, Of the devotion of the parent Storks for their offspring, a touching instance is recorded by Hadrian Junius, in his 'History of Batavia.' In the year 1536, the town of Delft was half destroyed by fire, and when a female Stork, who had been absent some time in quest of food, returned to her nest, she found the house on which it was built in flames. At first, she endeavoured with all her powers to extricate her young ones from the impending destruction, but they were unable to fly; and finding all her efforts useless, she at last covered them with her body, and allowed herself to be consumed along with those she was powerless to save. Another anecdote respecting Storks and a conflagration is probably more apocryphal, although it is said to have occurred in 1820, and is testified to by no less an authority than Okarius de Rudostadt, whoever that illustrious author may be. According to this gentleman, when the town of Kelbra, in Russia, took fire, the Storks converted themselves into impromptu engines, and assisted to extinguish the flames: the precise way in which they set about it he has unfortunately neglected to record.

The following more modern and less apocryphal instance of devotion and bravery on the part of this bird is extracted from the 'Memoirs of the Baroness d'Oberkirch':—

On the roof of the Cathedral, at Colmar, there had been placed a wheel, laid crosswise, as an inducement to the Storks to build their nests there. This is a custom throughout Alsace, it being a popular opinion in that part of the country that these birds are harbingers of good luck. The Storks had not failed to come, and from the windows of our inn we saw the sombre profile of a parent bird standing out in strong relief against the evening sky, then red-denied by the setting sun. A brood of young Storks was grouped around the parent, that stood upright upon its great claws. None in the nest slept; it was evident that they awaited an absent one, some straggler, perhaps, and from time to time we heard their wild and disagreeable cry. At length we perceived on the verge of the horizon, a Stork, with outspread wings, cleaving the air with arrowy swiftness, and closely pursued by a bird of prey of prodigious size, probably a vulture from the neighbouring mountains. The Stork was frightened, wounded, perhaps, and the cries of those in the nest responded to the parent's cry. We saw the poor frightened bird arrive straight over its nest, and fell there exhausted either by fatigue or pain. The other Stork then took her companion's place, and sprang towards the enemy. A fierce combat commenced; the two champions rushed upon one another, uttering terrific cries. But the glorious instinct of paternity displayed itself with incredible strength and energy in the Stork. Whilst defending herself, or attacking her gigantic adversary, she never for an instant lost sight of her little ones that lay trembling and terrified in the nest beneath, but tried

continually to cover them with her wings. At length, too weak to sustain an unequal combat, by a desperate effort she approached her branch-formed nest, where lay her expiring mate, and the young ones, yet unable to take wing. She caught the nest in her bill, shook it forcibly, and turned it over, dashing from the top of the tower the objects of her affection, rather than see them fall a prey to their enemy; then, devoting herself singly, a resigned victim, she fell upon the wheel, where, with a blow of his beak, the Vulture terminated her existence. We were all touched to the heart by the sight of this combat and this defence. To use an expression then in fashion, it was a real family tragedy. The Count du Nord especially seemed as much interested and excited as if he had been looking on a strife between two mail-clad warriors.

It is said by Bellonius that Storks visit Egypt in such abundance that the fields are white with them. Yet the Egyptians are not displeased with this sight; as frogs are so numerous that, did not the Storks devour them, they would overrun everything. The same writer informs us that, in some parts of Palestine rats and mice are so abundant, that the inhabitants would have no harvest were it not for the presence of this useful bird.

In Holland the Stork is protected, because it checks the multiplication of reptiles in the marshes; the Vaudois cherish and venerate it for its friendly offices; the Arabs, in like manner, treat it with the most hospitable regard; and the Turks and Eastern tribes consider it as a sacred bird, which they are forbidden to kill. At Constantinople, accordingly, the Storks build their nests in the streets. A Mussulman cannot patiently bear to see one of them molested; and the ancient Thessalians made the killing of them a capital crime. The Moors, too, religiously abstain from offering violence to them; and hence the valley of Monkazem appears to be the resort of all the Storks of Barbary, which, in this district, are more numerous than the inhabitants.

We learn, from Juvenal, that a Stork built its nest on the Temple of Concord, at Rome, in the midst of all the noise and bustle of the capitol, a circumstance which the medals of Adrian commemorated.

Southey, in his 'Letters from Spain,' says, that in that country the Storks build their broad nests on the towers of

the churches, and are held sacred; and at Bagdad, Niebuhr observed a nest of this bird on the roof of a decayed mosque, and he tells us that hundreds of the birds are to be seen there on every house, wall, and tree, quite tame. We are also told by Fryer, that they are so exceedingly numerous among the ruins of Persepolis, that the summit of almost every pillar of those magnificent monuments of antiquity contains a Stork's nest.

Generally speaking, the Stork is a remarkably silent bird; the only noise it ever makes is a peculiar rattling with the bill, not unlike the sound of castanets. When irritated and in a state of agitation, the head is thrown back so that the lower jaw appears uppermost, the bill lies flat on the back, and the two jaws striking violently together produced this clattering noise. We do not learn that this is often heard in the night, although Southey, in his poem entitled 'All for Love,' would lead us to suppose it to be so : —

And now the Nightingale hath ceased
 Her strain, who all night long
 Hath in the garden rosier trilled
 Her rich and rapturous song.
 The Storks on roof, and dome, and tower,
 Forbear their chattering din,
 For now the motions and the sounds
 Of daily life begin.

Before their autumnal departure from Europe, the Storks congregate in great numbers, and appear to hold consultations among themselves, and then it is that they emit most loudly and continuously this chattering noise. Thomson has well described the preparations for and commencement of their flight : —

When the Rhine loses its majestic force
 In Belgian plains, won from the raging deep
 By diligence amazing, and the strong
 Unconquerable hand of liberty,
 The Stork assembly meet; for many a day
 Consulting deep and various; ere they take
 Their arduous voyage through the liquid sky.
 And now their route designed, their leaders chose,
 Their tribes adjusted, cleaned their vigorous wings;

And many a circle, many a short essay,
 Wheeled round and round in congregation full,
 The figured flight ascends, and riding high,
 The aerial billow mixes with the clouds.

Milton has also finely described the flight of these birds:—

Part loosely wing the region, part, more wise,
 In common ranged in figure, wedge their way
 Intelligent of seasons, and set forth
 Their airy caravan, high over seas
 Flying and over lands with mutual wing
 Easing their flight.

How vast are the flocks of these birds which pass from country to country in their annual migrations may be judged by the fact related by Dr. Shaw, that he saw three flights of them leaving Egypt and passing over Mount Carmel, each half a mile in breadth; they occupied three hours in passing over. Well may Pope ask:—

Who bids the Stork, Columbus-like, explore
 Heavens not his own, and worlds unknown before?
 Who calls the council, states the certain day?
 Who forms the phalanx, and who points the way?

We can only answer — God, working by that mysterious faculty, or power, called instinct, by which, as the prophet Jeremiah says, ‘the Stork knoweth her appointed time.’

It is affirmed by an old naturalist, Aldovrandus, that the Black Stork is wont to make its nest on trees, particularly firs; as we read in the 14th Psalm, ‘As for the Stork, the fir trees are her house.’ Sir H. Wotton paraphrases this passage thus:—

So time the fowls their sundry seats to breed,
 The ranging Stork in stately beeches dwell.

The Hungarian boys on the islands of the Danube welcome the return of the Storks in spring with a carol like this:—

Stork! Stork! poor Stork!
 Why is thy foot so bloody?
 A Turkish boy hath torn it:
 Hungarian boy will heal it,
 With fiddle, fife, and drum.



GLOSSY IBIS.

THE GLOSSY IBIS (*Ibis falcinellus*).—This and the next species are the only British representatives of the *Tantalina*, a family of the Stalkers, which has but three genera, and is composed of birds belonging exclusively to warm climates. They combine the characters of the Herons or Storks and the Curlews. The two species which do visit our shores come as rare and accidental stragglers. Of the above-named several specimens have been taken here. It does not appear to be a permanent resident in any part of Europe, although it is found, during the summer months, in many countries of that continent, even in Switzerland and Siberia. In winter it migrates into Asia and Africa, chiefly perhaps into India and Egypt, where it is sometimes found preserved in the sepulchres; but not so frequently as its congener, the White Ibis, which is held more expressly sacred. It is a handsome bird, having the neck, breast, and lower parts of a bright chestnut red; the back, wings, and tail of a glossy green, with purple tints. The legs are very long and slender, and the bill enormously long, and broad at the base, giving the creature a very awkward ungainly appearance. Mitchell, in his 'Ruins of Many Lands,' has this allusion to it:—

Far down in Nubia's waste grey temples stand,
Tottering with age, each doorway choked with sand,

And further on, in groups against the sky,
Long lines of pyramids ascend on high.
By all forsaken, save by beasts of prey,
And that dark bird, a god in ancient day,
Whose voice still sounds, as shadowy twilight falls,
Like a ghost's wail along those lonely walls.

THE WHITE SPOONBILL (*Platalea leucorodia*).—A yet handsomer bird, as far as colour is concerned, is this species. The plumage is chiefly white. It has a silky crest, delicately tinged with yellow; and the lower part of the neck, with a portion of the breast, are of a pale buff. The bill is of a very singular shape, being long, and flattened at the end like a spoon, or rather a pair of spoons; hence its common name. This bird appears to be extensively distributed over the warmer parts of Europe, being especially abundant in Holland, where it remains only during the summer. It haunts, like the Ibis, the margins of rivers and estuaries, feeding on small fishes, mollusca, worms, and aquatic insects, for which it searches among the mud with its shovel-bill. Temminck says that it nestles in trees, or bushes, or among rushes, near the margins of the sea or large lakes, seldom going far inland to breed. It lays two or three white eggs, marked with faint rust-red spots, sparsely scattered, or sometimes white altogether.

A rare visitant in England. Pennant records the appearance of a large flight which arrived on the marshes near Yarmouth in April 1774; and Montagu describes it as sometimes seen during the winter on the coast of South Devon, from whence he received two specimens, one in 1804, and the other in 1807. Yarrell mentions two specimens which were shot in Lincolnshire in 1826.



WATER-RAIL.

CHAPTER XII.

RAILS, CRAIKS, &c. : — THE WATER-RAIL — THE CORN, SPOTTED, LITTLE, AND BAILLON'S CRAIKS — THE WATER HEN — COMMON COOT.

THE WATER-RAIL (*Rallus aquaticus*). — With this bird we enter upon Macgillivray's 16th order, *Latitores*, or Skulkers, of which but one family, the *Parrinæ*, have British representatives. In the first genus of the family, called *Rallus*, we find the bird above-named. The Rails are mostly small birds, varying in size between the Woodcock and the Snipe. They are all more or less aquatic in their habits, inhabiting the grassy margins of lakes and rivers, where they build their bulky nests of the vegetation near at hand. Their food is of a mixed nature, composed partly of worms, mollusca, insects, &c., and partly of seeds. They are very shy, hiding in the grass, swimming, and even diving upon occasions. Our Water-Rail is sometimes called the Bilcock, Runner, Skit, or Skiddy-Cock. It has a compressed body; small narrow head; the bill and feet are flat and sharp, and the wings pressed closely to the sides. One might imagine the head to have been squeezed

flat, on purpose that it might make its way easier among the stiff reeds and grassy undergrowth of the moist places which it frequents. The length of this bird is about eleven and a half inches. The legs are long and strong, and set far back on the body, the upper parts of which are of an olive colour, prettily mottled and streaked with dusky; the fore-neck and breast are purplish grey, and the sides and abdomen black and white, arranged in bars.

Although well known as a British species, this is not very abundant here, and its retired habits make it seem less so than it really is. Yarrell describes it as found in the marshy districts, and delighting to dwell among the rank vegetation of fens, shallow pools, and water-courses, from which it can scarcely be driven to take wing. If obliged to fly, to secure itself from being caught by an eager dog in close pursuit, its progress through the air is slow, with the legs hanging down; and it drops again on the nearest bed of reeds, flags, or rushes that is likely, from its size or density, to afford security.

The nest of this bird is rarely found. It is composed of coarse grass and sedge, and placed among the thickest aquatic plants. The eggs are from four to six in number, white, or of a light cream colour, speckled with ash-grey and red-brown. For food it takes worms, snails, slugs, &c., and some vegetables.

The following description of its habits is by Rusticus:—

We have the Water-rail common enough about Godalming. Those who have crossed the sea, return before the 'Land-rail' or 'daker' by about ten days. We expect the Water-rail on the 7th, the Land-rail on the 17th of April, and both keep their time with most commendable punctuality. The Water-rail's haunt near the town is usually called the 'Withy-beds,' low swampy covers, full of willows, alders, and coarse sedge and grass, that run along the side of the Wey, between the wharf and Sweetapple's paper mill at Catteshall. A second place he condescends to patronise is a swampy cover by the river at Godbold's, among highish trees, and a third is the willow-bed at the top of Ocford water. I have no doubt that the Water-rail breeds in all these places, for in all of them you may continually hear that strange, wild, powerful, shrill, half-whistling kind of a call, which he utters in the breeding season: a call, by the way, that used sorely to plague me, until I saw the bird actually utter it. I once heard it so distinct and loud that I was sure the bird was close

to me; so I stood as still as a post, and watched the bird skulking about among the great stumps of sedge, and saw him stand still and call. The only nest I have ever positively seen was in the willow-bed at Ocford water. I did not find it till the young birds were gone, and then there were two addled eggs and the fragments of five egg shells in it. Although I can boast of but this one instance of seeing a Water-rail's nest, you may be sure they are not uncommon here, but these birds live in places where humans can't follow them: the spaces between the great sedge-stumps look nice enough, something like custard with nutmeg grated over it, and just as soft. I should add that all birds of this species, but more particularly the young ones, have a weak and languid flight: great numbers of the birds of the year are quite unable to cross the sea, so that when the autumnal or southward migration sets in, we have arrivals of Water-rails from the north; many of which, as well perhaps as the birds bred with us, stay here during the winter. I have often killed them when Snipe-shooting; three or four of a morning.

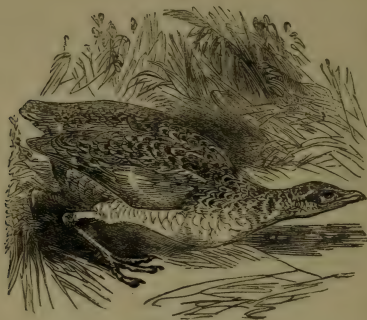
Bishop Mant thus alludes to this species:—

And, hark! with oft-repeated wail,
 Heard but not seen, the restless *Rail*
 For her low home forbearance begs!
 Scarce issued from the ruptured eggs,
 Swift through the scatter'd morning dew
 The young their fleeting dam pursue.
 In pity spare them! Lest trepann'd
 Though cherish'd by your fondling hand,
 Bereav'd the captive birds decline,
 And for their dam and freedom pine!

THE CORNCRAIK (*Crex pratensis*) — THE SPOTTED CRAIK (*C. Perzana*) — THE LITTLE CRAIK (*C. pusilla*) — BAILLON'S CRAIK (*C. Baillonii*).

The Craiks which comprise the genus *Crex*, are intermediate in form between the Rails and Water-hens; they are generally of small size, the largest not exceeding that of the common Partridge. They have slender compressed bodies, necks of moderate length, and flat oblong small heads. They inhabit meadows, corn-fields, marshy grounds, and waste places, with a rank growth of grasses and other herbage, among which they like to hide, running with great speed, and seldom rising on the wing, unless closely pursued, in which case they fly off in a heavy manner, with their legs dangling. They feed on

worms, mollusca, insects and seeds. Most of them swim and dive with ease; but some, and especially the first-named of the above species, keep chiefly to corn-fields, and other dry places. This bird, which is sometimes called the Land-rail, Land-hen, Daker-hen, or Corncracker, is



CORNCRACK.

the only one of the group which is at all common with us; it is about ten inches and three-quarters in length; the upper parts of the plumage are of a dull yellowish red, streaked with brownish black; the wing coverts are light red, the sides of the head grey; the lower parts are reddish white, the sides being light red with white bars.

This bird, like the Cuckoo, is much oftener heard than seen; it is a summer visitor, generally arriving near the end of April, and departing late in September. In the rich meadow lands and corn-fields of some parts of Britain, more especially in the south, may its peculiar cry resounding on every side, be heard during the greater part of May.

At all times of the day, but more especially in the early morning (as Macgillivray tells us), and towards twilight, is this well-known cry uttered; it resembles the syllables *crek, crek*, repeated at short intervals, and often continued for many minutes, probably a quarter of an hour or more. It has the reputation of being an expert ventriloquist, and whether or not it deserves the title, it is certainly

very apt to be mistaken as to the spot where the bird is when one listens to its cry, which is at one time loud, at another low, now seems to indicate a close proximity, now a remote position, and even appears to come from various directions. When uttering its cry the Corneraik usually remains still, standing with its neck considerably drawn in. I have watched it so employed through a hole in the wall; but I have also seen it walk leisurely along at the time. At the period when the nights are shortest, I have heard it commence its cry as early as one in the morning.

Although not gaudily attired, the Corneraik is richly coloured, and, when observed in its wild haunts, has an appearance of great elegance. It moves in a graceful manner, and when proceeding leisurely walks with what might be called sedateness, lifting its feet rather high, jerking up its short tail, and bending its neck backwards and forwards at every step, like the Water-hen. Alarmed, either while walking or uttering its cry, it instantly ceases, stands still or crouches, and if it judges it expedient, starts off, throwing its neck out and its body forward. It is not gregarious at any period of its residence with us, although in favourable situations, such as extensive meadows, many individuals may sometimes be found not far from each other. Its food consists of worms, testaceous mollusca, and insects, especially lepidoptera.

Soon after it arrives it begins to form its nest, which is composed of a few straws, laid in a slight hollow, among corn or herbage of any kind. The eggs, which are of a light cream colour, or pale greyish yellow, patched, spotted, and dotted with auburn brownish red, are from eight to twelve in number. In colour they bear a remarkable resemblance to those of the Mistle Thrush.

Very closely does the mother bird sit on her eggs. Daniel relates that, in 1808, as some men were mowing grass upon a little island belonging to the fishing water of Low Bells on Tweed, they cut the head from a Corneraik that was sitting upon eleven eggs; and a more recent instance is related in the following paragraph from a newspaper:—

‘As the mowers were cutting a field on the farm of Cockhall, near Eglinton, one of them, accidentally, nearly cut off the head of a Landrail, or Corneraik, while she was sitting on her nest. On examining the nest, it was found to contain six eggs, two of which were of her own production, two of the others were Partridge eggs, and the remaining two were the production of the domestic hen!’

Another cabinet picture, from the pencil of Macgillivray, we must introduce here:—

Let us imagine ourselves strolling over these flowery pastures that skirt the sandy shores of the Hebrides, anticipating the rising of the sun, and listening, as we proceed in the grey twilight, to the cries of the distant Gulls, and the loud crash of the little rivulet, whose fall on the sandy beach produces, it seems, a louder noise in the perfect calm than the rushing of the mighty billow would do in a storm. The bleating cry of the Snipe is heard on the hill side, and already has the Lark sprung from its sandy couch to warble its merry notes over the cornfield. Here let us crouch behind the turf wall, in view of that thicket of iris, and watch the Crakes, which I have often seen resort to it. There already, dimly seen, one is quietly walking along the grassy ridge, lifting high foot after foot, and sometimes stooping as if to pick up something. Now it stops, stands in a crouching posture, but on unbent legs, and commences its curious but monotonous song. Another is observed threading its way among the short grass of the adjoining piece of meadow-land. The ruddy streaks in the east betoken the sun's approach to the horizon. There along the tide-mark some dark-coloured bird approaches; it perceives us, wheels round, and comes up, announcing itself by its croak as the Hooded Crow. The Crakes seem to understand the warning, and immediately betake themselves to the thicket, whence we can easily start them. Yet they sometimes allow you to come within a yard or two before they rise, and so closely do they sit that I have once or twice seen a small pointer, which I had trained to bird-nesting, spring upon and seize one.

Jesse, in his remarks on this bird, says:—

I have met with an incident in the natural history of the Corn-crake, which I believe is perfectly accurate, having been informed the bird will put on the semblance of death, when exposed to danger from which it is unable to escape. The incident was this: A gentleman had a Corncrake brought to him by his dog, to all appearance quite dead. As it lay on the ground, he turned it over with his foot, and was convinced it was dead. Standing by it, however, in silence, he suddenly saw it open an eye. He then took it up; its head fell, its legs hung loose, and it appeared again quite dead. He then put it into his pocket, and before long he felt it all alive, and struggling to escape. He then took it out; it was as lifeless as before. Having laid it again upon the ground, and retired to some distance, the bird in about five minutes warily raised its head, looked round, and decamped at full speed. I have seen a similar circumstance take place with a Partridge; and it is well known that many insects will practise the same deception.

In some parts of Scotland it is believed that this bird does not leave the country, but hibernates or becomes torpid during the winter, when it is certain that solitary

specimens are occasionally seen. A still more extraordinary 'vulgar error' is cherished in Ireland, viz. that the Corncraik becomes a Water-hen in the cold season. Burns evidently does not share in his countrymen's belief, for in his 'Elegy on Capt. Henderson' he says:—

Mourn, clam'ring Craiks, at close o' day,
 'Mang fields o' flow'ring clover gay,
 And when ye wing your annual way
 Frae our cold shore,
 To thae far warlds, wha lies in clay,
 Whom we deplore.

Of the other British members of the Craik genus but little need be said, as they are all rare birds.

The Spotted Craik, sometimes called the Spotted Rail, Water-rail, Water-hen, or Skilty, is about nine inches long; the plumage is dull brown, with dusky streaks and white spots above, paler beneath, the sides barred with light red and whitish; the wings light red. In form and general appearance it is much like the Corncraik, but it is considerably smaller than that bird, and more decidedly aquatic in its habits. It has been found, though rarely, in nearly all parts of Britain. Its nest is described as of large size, formed of decayed water-plants, and placed among reeds often surrounded by water. The eggs are from seven to ten in number, of a pale red or dark grey colour, spotted with umber or deep reddish brown, and brownish grey; it is sometimes called the Spotted Gallinule.

The Little Craik.—The length of this species is generally under seven inches: like the other members of its genus it has enormously long legs, fitting it to run upon the broad leaves and water weeds without sinking. It constructs its nest in the marshes upon broken reeds, rushes, &c., and lays seven or eight yellowish eggs, sprinkled with bluish spots of an olive tint. The plumage is olive brown, with a few white streaks above, bluish grey beneath, having the sides and abdomen faintly barred with brown and white. Montagu calls this the Little Gallinule, and describes it as equally capable of diving and concealing its body under water, with only the bill above the surface to secure respiration; and of running with celerity, and

hiding itself among the rushes and flags of swampy places, so that it is difficult to capture or shoot.

Baillon's Craik has plumage of a yellowish brown colour, spotted with white and undulated with black above, the sides and abdomen barred with black and white. It is smaller by nearly an inch than the last species, with which it is sometimes confounded, and which both in habits and appearance it closely resembles. It always nestles as nearly as possible to the water, without ever frequenting the fields, and lays seven or eight eggs of the colour and shape of olives. But few specimens have been obtained in this country.

The following lines by Bishop Mant on the commonest of the four species will fitly conclude our account of the Craiks:—

But, hark! as by the cornfield's side,
Where the fresh blades aspiring hide
With wavy folds its furrow'd breast,
The ear what startling sounds arrest!
Perhaps you deem from fenny bog
You hear the croaking of the frog
Monotonous, afar or nigh,
The same untun'd repeated cry.
Again the sound! Now here, now there,
It tempts to follow: but howe'er
Your steps the fleeting cry pursue,
You'll scarce the cause retiring view;
You'll scarce with foot or eye o'ertake
The dark form of the mottled *Crake*;
As his long legs low-bending pass
Through the high corn or waving grass,
With body prone; nor dares his wing
Up from the verdant covert spring.

THE WATER-HEN, or GREENFOOTED GALLINULE (*Fulica chloropus*, or *Gallinula*)—sometimes called the Moor, Marsh, or Stank Hen. This bird represents another genus of the first family of Skulkers; it is the only one of the *Gallinulæ* known in Britain. The birds of this genus differ from the Craiks, chiefly in having the base of the ridge of the upper mandible expanded into an oblong plate, which covers a greater or less extent of the forehead; and in the flattened soles of the toes, which are expanded into two narrow

margins. They inhabit meadows, marshes, and swampy places covered with weeds, sedges, and other strong herbage. They feed on worms, mollusca, insects, and seeds chiefly of the grasses, in search of which they make excursions



WATER-HEN.

into the neighbouring meadows. They swim and dive with ease, and when in danger conceal themselves by diving and rising under a bank, or merely projecting their heads under cover of the herbage.

They nestle on the ground among the reeds, or on a tuft of dry ground, or a decayed tree, forming a bulky nest of reeds, straw, or similar materials. The eggs are five or more in number, dull white, or yellowish, spotted or speckled with dusky. The following is Macgillivray's description of the above-named species:—

The Water-hen is found in all parts of Scotland and England that are adapted to its nature. It frequents marshy places, pools, lakes, still streams, mill-dams, and even ditches, where it searches for food chiefly among the reeds and other aquatic plants along the shores. It swims with great ease and elegance, sitting lightly on the water, with its neck erect, and its tail obliquely raised. It dives with equal facility, and in travelling among the reeds, sedges, and other aquatic plants, makes its way with surprising ease, owing to the compression of its body, and its elongated toes. When surprised in a narrow stream or ditch, it usually dives, and conceals itself among the plants or beneath the banks, often remaining for a long time submerged, with

nothing but the bill above the water. I have seen it thus betake itself to the margin, when, on my going up to the spot, thinking the motion among the grass had been produced by a water-rat, it sprang up from under the water and flew away. On other occasions I have traced it under the overhanging earth, in a hole among the stones, and behind a waterfall. When disturbed in a large pool or lake, it either swims out to the open water, or betakes itself to the reeds or sedges, among which it remains concealed until the danger is over; and from its hiding-place it is not easily scared, for as its power of flight is not of a high order, it prefers the asylum of the water.

I know of few sights more pleasing than that of a brood of young Water-hens, led forth by their parents to feed and sport along the silent margins of a lake or pool, thickly studded with water-lilies. The lime and walnut are beginning to shed their fragrance, hardly surpassed by that of the citron groves of Andalusia, or the odours of 'Araby the blest.' Yon castellated mansion, once the seat of lordly baron or gallant knight, but now hoary with age and crumbling into ruins, gives solemnity to the scene. The setting sun flings his golden rays across the lake, skirting the green woods, and tinting here and there the crested turret, the overhanging cliff, and the moss-crowned height. Beside yon pollard willow the cow crops the fresh grass, while forth sails the stately swan, giving her ample bosom to the watery expanse, now ruffled by the evening breeze. There too, afar, stands the Heron, watching his finny prey: the garrulous Wild Ducks chequer the little islands, the Coot cries from amid the sedge, the Sandpiper wails along the shingly beach, and the sonorous croak of the Carrion Crow is heard from the distant wood. Other sights and sounds mingle with these, reminding us that we are in happy England, but leading us to forget the object of our contemplation — the Water-hen. Often this bird, partly crepuscular in its habits, startles the evening wanderer with its sharply-reiterated chuck. In autumn it will haunt stubbles, for the purpose of feeding on different kinds of small seeds, which are found in abundance lying on the ground after the fields are cleared by the husbandman. I have repeatedly seen it perch on lofty trees after being flushed, and have known it to frequent the branches of willows and other shrubs growing near the water. When pursued, it shows great adroitness in keeping its body beneath the water, leaving only its bill exposed, so that it may obtain the necessary supply of air until its enemies are past. In such cases I have more than once caught it by dragging it out of the water by the feet, when I have been trammelling for tench or carp. When domesticated it becomes pugnacious, and will drive away domestic poultry from their feeding-places, manifesting a disposition widely different from what might be expected from the timidity which it evinces when in its native liberty.

Garratt, in his 'Marvels and Mysteries of Instinct,' writes thus:—

Instances of unusual foresight in the mode of constructing a nest, or in the choice of its situation, are related in most books of natural history, and they might be much multiplied; but the following, by Rusticus of Godalming, taken from 'Loudon's Magazine,' is sufficient to show how decidedly mind presides over the proceeding:—The piece of water called Old Pond, about one mile from Godalming, on the London Road, is a most attractive spot to water-fowl; and an island in the centre is the resort of some of them in the breeding season, and also a variety of other birds, which find it a safe and unmolested place for the same purpose. One day, having pushed off from the shore, and moored the little shallop to some of the osiers which surrounded the island, I began my usual examination. The first object that attracted my attention was a lot of dry rushes, flags, reeds, &c., enough to fill a couple of bushel-baskets. This mass was lodged about twenty feet from the ground in a spruce fir-tree, and looked for all the world as if it had been pitched there with a hay-fork. I mounted instantly, thinking of Herons, Eagles, and a variety of other wonders. Just as my head reached the nest, 'flap! flap!' and out came a Moor-hen; and dropping to the water, made off in a direct line along the surface, and was lost in the rushes of a distant bank. The nest contained seven eggs, warm as a toast. The situation was a very odd one for a Moor-hen's nest; but there was a reason for it: the rising of the water in the pond frequently flooded the banks of the island, and, as I had before witnessed, had destroyed several broods by immersion.

An interesting account of Moor-hens moving their eggs to make an addition to their nest when the rising of the water by which it was situated rendered this necessary, is related by Selby in the printed proceedings of the Berwickshire Naturalists' Club. In this instance the birds removed the eggs to a safe place until the necessary addition to the nest was made, and then replaced them: how they effected this was not ascertained. That this bird is not easily frightened from the performance of her maternal duties, we may learn from the following anecdote by Waterton:—

In 1826, I was helping a man to stub some large willows near the water's edge. There was a Water-hen's nest at the root of one of them. It had seven eggs in it. I broke two of them, and saw they contained embryo chickens. The labourer took up part of the nest, with the remaining five eggs in it, and placed it on the ground, about three yards from the spot where we found it. We continued in the same place for some hours afterwards, working at the willows. In the evening, when we went away, the old Water-hen came back to her nest. Having no more occasion for the labourer in that place, I took

the boat myself the next morning, and saw the Water-hen sitting on the nest. On approaching the place, I observed that she had collected a considerable quantity of grass and weeds, and that she had put them all around the nest. A week after this I went to watch her, and saw she had hatched; and, as I drew nearer to her, she went into the water, and the five little ones along with her.



COOT.

THE COMMON, or BALD COOT (*Fulica atra*) — sometimes called the Cute, Queet, or Bald Duck. We have here the only British representative of the genus *Fulica*, and the largest native water-bird of the *Parrinæ* family, its length being usually sixteen inches. The head and upper parts of the neck are greyish black, the upper parts of the body dark bluish grey, the lower parts brownish grey; it has a curious white horny kind of plate extending from the upper mandible of the bill, which is flesh-coloured, up over the forehead; hence it is called the *Bald Coot*. The legs are of moderate length, and the claws very long, slender, and slightly arched.

This species is generally distributed throughout Britain, being found in suitable localities in all parts, from the most southern English counties to the extreme north of Scotland. In winter, however, it migrates southward, but does not leave the country in which it is permanently resident, although only known as a summer visitant in the more southerly parts. The great flocks, which in spring-time collected along the eastern shores of England,

disperse. The birds arrive in the south of Scotland in April, but in the north not until the beginning of May, as we are informed by Macgillivray, who says,

Its favourite places of resort are large pools, lakes, or rivers, overgrown or margined with reeds, flags, sedges, water-lilies, and other aquatic plants, among which it swims about in search of its food, which consists of seed, fresh blades of grass, mollusca, and insects. In shallow pools or marshes densely covered with *Equisetum limosum* I have seen paths made by it, from which others diverged in all directions. Sometimes it makes excursions into the neighbouring fields, where it walks and runs in precisely the same manner as the Water-hen, and with equal ease, the lobes of its feet forming no impediment to its free action; but it is not so ready as that bird to quit its safe retreat on the waters. It is extremely shy and vigilant, instantly betakes itself to flight when approached, but very seldom flies off unless one comes suddenly upon it, or a shot be fired at it, when it rises at a very low angle, splashing up the water with its wings and feet, proceeds but to a short distance, and alighting, conceals itself among the reeds or equiseta, and remains there until the danger be over. Its vigilance and distrust of man render it difficult to approach other birds, such as Ducks or Grebes, that may be on the same pool, it being almost sure to alarm them by its cries and flight. It floats lightly on the water, swims sedately, jerking its tail, and moving its neck backwards and forwards. When much disturbed, it often prefers swimming off to a distance from the shore, and there, when the water is extensive enough for its safety, it may frequently be seen remaining for hours, even apparently after it has seemed to be apprehensive of danger from the land. It dives with ease, and sometimes eludes pursuit by retreating under the surface of the water to emerge in a concealed part. In summer it emits a loud abrupt cry, resembling the note of a trumpet.

Its nest, which is extremely large, and composed of decayed flags, reeds, equiseta, and other plants, is placed among reeds, equiseta, or willow, or sometimes in shallow water, being built up to a considerable height. Sometimes the nests are placed on small islands, covered with herbage, in unfrequented places on the shores. Mr. Hewitson, from personal inspection, says:—

They are large and apparently clumsy at first sight, but are amazingly strong and compact; they are sometimes built on a tuft or rushes, but more commonly amongst reeds; some are supported by those that lie prostrate on the water, whilst others have their foundations at the bottom, and are raised till they become from six to twelve inches above its surface, sometimes in a depth of one and

a half or two feet. So firm are some of them that, whilst up to the knees in water, they afforded me a seat sufficiently strong to support my weight. They are composed of flags and broken reeds, finer towards the inside, and contain from seven to eight eggs. The materials vary according to the locality, and frequently the nests are formed entirely of *Equisetum limosum*. These birds, says Montagu, place their nests among the flags upon the surface of the water; but by heaping a large quantity of the same materials together, raise the fabric sufficiently above water to keep the eggs dry. In this buoyant state a sudden flood, attended by a gale of wind, has been known to drive them from their moorings; and we are assured by an intelligent observer of nature, that he has seen a nest floated from one side of a large piece of water to the other, with the bird upon it. The eggs, which vary in number from six to ten, are much larger than those of the Water-hen, but very similar, being of an elongated oval, light yellowish grey or stone colour, marked all over with dots and small spots of brownish black.

Bishop Mant gives a faithful and pleasing picture of this bird:—

And lo! where dives the hungry *Coot*.
I know him by his sable suit,
Streak'd with the pinion's border white,
And o'er his bill the frontlet bright.
Again he dives: you well might know
There's store of finny prey below,
Ev'n heard you not the frequent dash
Break the still lake with sudden splash;
What time, emerging from the deep,
The fish with spring elastic leap;
Nor saw the rippling motion pass
In circles o'er the wavy glass.
The wavy glass is smooth again:
And mark! no wrinkle now, nor stain,
Disturbs the crystal mirror's face;
Where in illusive trails we trace
Complete, as limner's brush can show,
The sunbright sky's cerulean glow.
The margin, that the waters lave,
The flags that on the margin wave,
The sheep and cows and pastures green,
And circling hills are pictured seen.

CHAPTER XIII.

SWIMMING BIRDS :—GEESE—THE DUCK-BILLED, NARROW-BILLED, AND SHORT-BILLED GREY GEESE—THE WHITE-FRONTED, AND CANADA GEESE—THE WHITE-FACED, BLACK-FACED, AND RED-NECKED BERNACLE GEESE—THE EGYPTIAN FOX GOOSE, AND SPUR-WINGED GOOSE.

THE feathered creatures which we have now to describe, are those which are usually considered strictly aquatic birds, seeking their food, and passing much of their time amid the waters. They are the *Natatores* of some authors, the term coming from the Latin *nato*, to swim, and comprise the sixth or last order of the class *Aves*, or Birds, in the arrangement of Cuvier. They are sometimes called *Palmipedes*, in reference to their webbed feet, and are very commonly designated Water-fowl. With us, the members of this order are very numerous, our geographical position, great extent of coast, and varied character of country, tending to this result. Thus we find that they comprehend nearly one-third of the whole number of British species ; yet, from the circumstance of many of them being but winter visitants, and of others which are constantly resident, frequenting only wild and inaccessible places, their peculiar habits and appearance are less known to us than are those of any other kind. Macgillivray divides them into three orders, of which he gives the following characteristic sketch :—

SIFTERS, DIVERS, AND PLUNGERS.

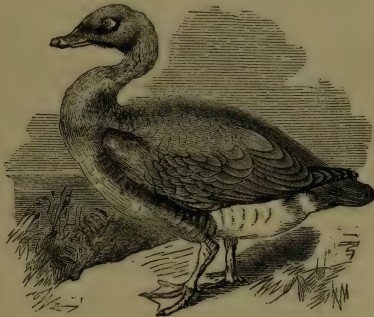
The difference of these three orders, as to habits as well as structure, is so obvious, that he who, residing on the seashore, and

taking daily note of some of the species of which they are composed, is not struck by them, must be peculiarly unobservant, or unaccustomed to compare the objects that attract his notice. High in air, advancing on gently-arched and outspread wings, that winnow a passage for them over the far-spread sea, is seen advancing from the North a flock of large birds, that are observed, as they draw nearer, to be arranged in lines, ever undulating and changing figure, while their clear cries seem to express their joy at having escaped the dangers of their long passage over the isleless waste of waters. Now they descend, mingle their ranks, wheel in dislocated bands, unite, sweep along, and, clamorous in their joy, at length alight on the open pasture. Having rested awhile and plumed themselves, they begin to move about in search of food, walking sedately, and with decurved necks, directing their strong bills to the ground, from which they wrench the roots of the grasses, and pluck the herbage. Prudent, however, as well they need to be in an unexplored tract, and careful of their safety, they neither scatter about at random, nor leave themselves subject to surprise. Should a suspicious object present itself, one of them presently erects himself, and emits a warning cry, on hearing which they all run together, raise their necks to their full stretch, and carefully inspect the ground. Should the danger be imminent, they run a few paces forward, spreading their large wings, ascend into the air, and betake themselves to some distant place.

Here, close to the rocks on the shore, a large bird has abruptly emerged from the deep, and is gliding smoothly and rapidly along, his body half sunk in the water, and his bill directed towards it. As suddenly he disappears, gliding noiselessly with vigorous spring into the bosom of the sea. You watch his reappearance perhaps a whole minute or more, and there, at a great distance, he emerges, bearing in his bill a moderate-sized fish, which he soon swallows with erected head and widened throat.

Now sweeps into view from behind the headland a large bird, gliding on outspread wings, now inclining for a space to this side, now to that, then shooting along in a curve; at one time skimming the water, at another ascending to a considerable height, and now and then emitting a singular cry, somewhat resembling the sounds of human laughter. He suddenly descends, hovers with upraised wings, lets down his feet, with which he seems to pat the water, dips his beak and head into it, and, exulting, carries off a small fish, which he securely disposes of. He then alights, sitting buoyantly on the sea; but finding that by swimming he cannot keep his place in the current, he stretches his large wings, and flies off to a distant spot, where several birds are hovering over the waves, dipping at intervals and emitting their harsh screams, they being engaged with a shoal of fish. Now these three birds are good enough representations of the three orders characterised above.

GEESE, called in scientific language *Anserinæ*, comprise the first family of the *Cribratores*, or Sifters. They inhabit chiefly the arctic and antarctic regions in summer, and migrate in autumn towards the equator. They are decidedly gregarious, and when in their migrations fly in lines, with a strong, rapid flight, usually keeping at a great height, yet being conspicuous objects on account of their large size, and attracting attention by their loud cries. They make bulky nests on the ground in marshy situations, and lay several eggs of an uniform colour, which is generally white, or but slightly tinged with green or brown, or some other tint. Next to the swans, they are the largest birds of their order, and important on account of the sustenance they afford in their eggs and flesh, which is savoury and nutritious; and also on account of the useful purposes to which their quills, feathers, and down are put. They are slow and awkward in their movements on land, but in their native element they move with ease and grace. They feed on vegetable substances of various kinds.



GREY GOOSE.

THE THICK-BILLED GREY GOOSE (*Anser ferus*), sometimes called the Wild, Marsh, Grey, or Fen Goose, or the Grey Lag. Of this bird, which is about thirty-three inches

in length, Temminck says that it inhabits the east coasts and marshes of the eastern countries; seldom advances northward beyond the fifty-third degree; is abundant in Germany and towards the centre of Europe; and occurs only in its migrations, and in very small numbers, in Holland and France.

It is said to have been at one time abundant, and permanently resident, in England; but it is by no means common now in any part of Britain, and certainly does not remain to breed with us. Macgillivray says that it makes its approach in various parts of the country towards the beginning of winter, and departs towards the end of April. It resorts to marshes, pastures, and cultivated fields; its food consisting of the root stems of aquatic grasses, young corn, clover, and other green herbage. Being very shy and vigilant, it is not easily shot, and when feeding in the fields, on the alarm being given by one individual, they all erect their necks, run forward, and uttering their loud, grating cries, spring into the air. Their flight is rather heavy and sedate, performed at a great height when they are proceeding to a distance, the birds on such occasions advancing in two lines, forming an acute angle. So Mant describes it:—

Alike in wedge-like ranks aloft,
 The Geese, with downy plumage soft,
 Or in the long-drawn column's range,
 As Nature's dictate prompts the change,
 Speed to the south on clanging pens
 To winter in the marshy fens.
 The Grey Lag Goose, which wing'd of old
 The cloth-yard shaft of bowyer bold.
 Of docile manners, mild, the base,
 So reckon'd, of the household race,
 Which graze around the farmer's home,
 O'er stubble-field and common roam,
 But chief in eastern fens reside;
 Broad Lincoln's treasure and her pride.
 He on whose bill imprest is seen,
 Thence named, the semblance of a *Bean*;
 He who of white the double print
 Bears on his neck, the dusky *Brent*;
 He his white frontlet's shining mark,
 Who circles with a margin dark;
 And whilome deem'd from sea-born shell

To drop, full-fledg'd, the *Bernacle*;
 Distinct his mottled plumes' array
 With crescent rims, black, white, and grey;
 All white his cheeks; with sable spread
 His neck, and breast, and slender head.
 Stragglers besides, but these the most,
 Arrang'd in duly-marshal'd host.
 In Arctic regions nurtured, thence
 Now first their wintry flight commence,
 In wedge-like troop right onward bear,
 Or cleave with streaming file the air.
 The careful leader's gathering cry,
 Behind, the attentive train's reply,
 Alternate, as they forward steer
 Their rapid course, give mutual cheer.

We have here several species of Wild Geese brought under our notice, all of which will presently be more fully described. The Common Wild Goose, or Grey Lag, is placed as leader of the migratory host, and his size and strength give him a claim to this distinction. Whether, as some say, he is the sole originator of our domestic breed, is open to question. Yarrell is of opinion that another species, the White-fronted, may fairly claim a share in this distinguished service to man. Our Grey Lag is a handsome bird, although there is not much variety in his colours, these being chiefly brown and ash grey, relieved with white; the bill is of an orange tint, and the feet a dull flesh-colour. Yarrell terms this the Grey-legged Goose, but it is the claws only which have a purplish grey tint; indeed, to no species of Wild Goose which visits Britain will this term properly apply.

THE NARROW-BILLED GREY GOOSE (*Anser segetum*).—This is the *Anas Anser* of Linnæus, the Bean Goose of most authors, so called because it has a mark on the bill which is thought to bear some resemblance to a bean. It is somewhat smaller in size than the last species, with which it is often confounded, although the colours of its plumage are generally somewhat darker. The common term, Wild Goose, is as often applied to this as to the Grey Lag; it is also sometimes called the Small Grey Goose.

Although a regular winter visitant in Britain and Ireland, it is very doubtful whether this species ever breeds

with us. Macgillivray was informed that it did so in the outer Hebrides; but, although he sought for them, was unable to find a nest or unfledged young. 'In early autumn,' he says, 'when the barley begins to ripen, flocks of these birds commit great havoc among it in unfrequented places, often at night, but mostly at early dawn. It is almost impossible to approach them while thus feeding, however irregular the ground may be, as they see at night much better than their enemy.' He relates that a man in Harris, hearing the Geese on the marsh close to his house, went out in the dark, and, having shot across a narrow creek where he conceived them to be, returned. In the dawn, when he went to pick up the Geese, he found dead on the opposite bank his own horse, which had been reposing there. He further describes them as sitting lightly on the water, floating beautifully with their heads to the wind, like a fleet of merchantmen; swimming with good speed, but rising heavily, striking the water with their large wings, which, when rising from the ground, they spread out and flap, running forward some paces. They feed chiefly by night, unless in remote places, on the soft pasture grass, and long juicy stems of aquatic plants. They have a heavy and rather slow flight, the birds disposing themselves in lines—now straight, now angular or waving, when they are proceeding to a distance. Their loud cries, rather harsh and grating when heard at hand, are pleasant to the ear when coming from a distance, especially in the stillness of the night. Partridge, in 'Our English Months,' well describes these birds and their congeners, which may be heard when the gloom of a November night has closed in around us; then—

In the quiet midnight, high in air,
The screaming wild-geese, in a wedge-like cloud,
With intermittent and discordant cries
Startle the sleeping hamlet. Round the coast
The various wild-fowl pour in countless flocks
From Northern skies. Up the small sinuous creeks
And inlets of the sea, they still ascend,
In search of fish-spawn, on the reedy shores,
Their sad wail blending with the moaning sea.
Of race distinct, the various wandering tribes

Pass and repass, a strange confused crowd.
Arrived, with caution they to earth descend
From their safe height, and scattering divide
In smaller companies.

THE SHORT-BILLED GREY GOOSE (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), better known, perhaps, as the Pink-footed Goose, first described as a British bird, and exhibited by Mr. Bartlett, in January 1839, at an evening meeting of the Zoological Society, but previously described and named *brachyrhynchus*, or short-billed, by a French naturalist. Mr. Bartlett's name is perhaps the best, there being, as Yarrell says, 'several geese with short bills, but only one other that has pink legs and feet.' Little is known of the habits of this bird in a wild state, although it has been met with in various parts of England, and not very uncommonly in the south of Scotland. Mr. J. Macgillivray says that it breeds in great numbers on the small islands of the Sound of Harris, as well as of those of the interior of North Uist, where it has been seen in flocks as late as the beginning of May, and observed in pairs about the middle of the month, having its young fully fledged and strong on the wing about the end of July. The general length of this bird is thirty-one inches; in the colour of its plumage it closely resembles the Bean Goose, its main distinction from which is its shorter bill.

THE WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser albifrons*), sometimes called the Laughing, or Bald Goose.—Another name sometimes given to this species is the Tortoise-shell Goose, from the peculiar markings on the breast and belly, which are very striking and distinct; the forehead is white with a black band, hence the name 'bald' often applied to it, which is very incorrect, for the white part is as well covered with feathers as any other. Twenty-eight inches is the common length of this species, whose plumage is an admixture of brown, grey, and white, but with deeper bars and markings than on those previously described. This is the common Goose of Lapland, where, from frequenting more elevated regions than any of its congeners, it is called the Mountain Goose. It generally makes its appearance in this country about the end of October, and departs about

the beginning of April. Its habits are similar to those of the other species, with which it is often confounded—the name Wild Goose being indiscriminately applied to all. This is the bird which is said to have had a share, at least, in producing the Domestic Goose.

THE CANADA GOOSE (*Anser Canadensis*), sometimes called the Cravat Goose, on account of a clearly-defined white patch, which extends from the throat up the sides of the head, distinguishing this from all other species of the genus *Anser*. In its form, and especially the elongation of the neck, this bird resembles the Swan. It is of large size, measuring forty-two inches in length. Excepting the patch above named, the head, with two-thirds of the neck, is all of a glossy black. The upper parts of the body are greyish brown; lower parts greyish white. The abdomen is pure white, and the legs and feet black; for the rest, ash grey and brown of different shades prevail, and produce a very beautiful and harmonious *ensemble*. This bird weighs from ten to twelve, and sometimes as much as fourteen pounds—a heavy weight for a pair of wings to bear all the way from the extremest north of the American Continent. It is only as an occasional straggler that it visits these islands, where, however, many specimens have been taken, some of them having probably escaped from confinement—the bird being not uncommonly kept to improve the domestic breed, on account of its large size.

THE WHITE-FACED BERNACLE GOOSE (*Anser*, or *Bernicla leucopsis*), sometimes called the White-cheeked, or Land Bernacle, the Claikis, Clakis, or Claick Goose. This is the *Anser Bernicla* of Linnæus, and is one of those species which may equally claim the benefit, such as it is, of the popular belief of their having been produced from barnacles, those curious shell-fish, like snakes, with plumed helmets, which may sometimes be seen covering the surface of timber which has been for a time submerged in the ocean. The old natural historian, Aristotle, describes the process of growth of these anomalous sea-birds, the springing of the downy plumes from between the shelly covering at the extremity

of the fish, and the final separation of the winged creature from its parent stem, as it were, to soar away rejoicing in its freedom. The notion seemed to be that they grew from



BERNACLE GOOSE.

the wood of trees, which bent their branches into, or whose trunks stood in the water; hence they have been called Tree Geese. It is only within the last two or three centuries that even the learned have altogether rejected this foolish notion, which yet prevails to some extent among the illiterate. The generic name, *Bernicla*, was first applied to certain species of Geese by Stephens, and Macgillivray retains it, although under protest, simply because he cannot find a better.

The Bernacles are described as differing from the True Geese only in having smaller heads, shorter and more conical bills, the feathers of the neck not arranged in grooves and ridges, those of the breast much larger, and having a predominance of black in their plumage, bills, and feet. Their habits are much like those of other Geese, than which they are, perhaps, more active and lively. There are three British species, of which that styled *leucopsis*, meaning white-faced, is the largest. It is twenty-seven inches long, has the back of the head and neck glossy black, contrasting beautifully with the white throat, fore part and sides of the

head. The fore and hind parts of the back are also black, like the bill and feet; the middle part of the back and wing coverts are ash grey, banded with black, and the lower parts of the body are white, shaded at the sides with grey. This is another winter visitant to the British islands, appearing in considerable flocks, especially if the weather is severe. It is more abundant on the western than on the eastern coasts, and is very wild and shy, although, when taken captive, it soon becomes reconciled, and will breed with other species.

THE BLACK-FACED BERNACLE GOOSE (*Bernicla Brenta*), variously called the Black-headed, or Ring-necked Bernacle; the Brand, Brent, Clatter, Horra, or Wave Goose. This species is considerably smaller than the one last described, from which it may be easily distinguished by its having the head and neck entirely black, with the exception of a small patch of white on each side of the upper part of the latter. Above, the body is brownish grey; below, greyish white, with cinereous bars on the sides. Twenty-five inches is the usual length of this bird, which is abundant in many parts of the British coasts, from the end of October until the beginning of April. Many of this species are annually shot or snared for the markets; the numbers vary in different parts of the coast according to circumstances. Mr. Boys, of Sandwich, informed Montagu, that in the year 1739-40, when they were extremely abundant on the Continent, they were so plentiful on the coast of Kent, and in such a starving condition, that they suffered themselves to be knocked down with sticks and stones, and were carried in carts to the neighbouring towns, and sold for sixpence a-piece. In the year 1803, again, according to the same authority, they were innumerable about Sandwich, and were so miserably poor and debilitated as not to be able to rise after alighting. Mr. Boys mentions it as remarkable that these Geese were all of one species, not a single Bernacle, Grey Lag, or Bean Goose being seen among them. It is noted also as a curious circumstance, that these excessive immigrations of Brent Geese should be so local, as often, when they were thus plentiful on the

eastern coast of the kingdom, no specimens are recorded to have occurred on the west, although in other years they were not uncommon there. They do not remain with us during the breeding season, their proper home being the arctic regions of both continents. There they make their nests of withered herbage on the ground in marshy places, and lay their pale, greyish green eggs. While with us, their chief food seems to be a sea-plant called the *Zostera marina*.

THE RED-NECKED BERNACLE GOOSE (*Anser*, or *Bernicla, ruficollis*), sometimes called the Red-breasted Bernacle, is a smaller and handsomer bird than either of the two preceding species; its general length is twenty-two inches; the throat, upper part of the head, and a narrow band down the neck behind, are black, as is also the breast, the sides being banded with this colour and white; the upper parts of the body are brownish black, and the under parts white; the fore part of the neck is brownish red, and there are patches of the same between the bill and the eyes, margined with bands of black and white, giving the whole a charmingly diversified appearance. This is only known in Britain as a rare visitant; it inhabits the arctic regions of Asia, and occasionally makes its appearance in various parts of Europe. One specimen was shot in the neighbourhood of London, in the severe winter of 1756; about the same time another was taken alive in Yorkshire. In 1813, another severe frost, several specimens were killed in Cambridgeshire: one or two others only are recorded as having been taken in these islands.

THE EGYPTIAN FOX GOOSE (*Anser*, or *Chenalopex, Ægyptiacus*), sometimes called the Egyptian Goose.—A large and beautiful bird this, measuring about twenty-eight inches in length; it has a prominent margin at the base of the upper mandible of the red bill, and a bare knob on the joints of the wings. The eyes are orange red, and a space round about them, with a band from thence to the base of the bill, is chestnut red; the rest of the bird is cream coloured, shaded with reddish brown along the hind part of the neck for half its length, where it enlarges, and passes across the neck in front; the throat is reddish cream

colour, which becomes lighter as it passes over the breast, where there is a patch of deep chestnut red, to the under parts of the body. The fore part of the back and the scapulars are brownish red, undulated with dusky and grey; the rest of the back, and tail feathers, black. Now give to some of the black wing feathers a fringe of dark glossy green, margin others with grey and light red, and throw over all dusky waves like smoke wreaths and shifting cloud shadows, and we have as charming a *tout ensemble* as could be desired.

This is the only British representative of the *Chenalopex*, or Fox-Goose genus. A native of Africa, introduced into this country on account of its beauty, it may not unfrequently be seen on ornamental pieces of water, in a semi-domesticated state, and sometimes in wilder spots far away from the protection of man, as it is a bird apt to stray and find for itself a home and a breeding-place more akin to its free nature than any we can provide for it. So that, like the Pheasant, although not originally indigenous to those islands, it has become to some extent a naturalised denizen therein. Thus it is that specimens have often been obtained at great distances from any place where they have been fostered. On the banks of the river Tyne, near Tynningham, in East Lothian, a flock of nineteen of these birds was observed by Mr. John Hay to fly to the southward from the sea, in stormy weather; on their leader, the largest, being shot, they turned and flew seaward again, rather trusting to the elements than men.

THE SPUR-WINGED GOOSE (*Anser*, or *Plectropterus*, *Gambiensis*).—This is another single representative of a restricted genus, *Plectropterus* meaning spur-winged. The members of this genus differ but little from the preceding, except that they present, instead of a soft or skin-covered knob at the bend of the wing, a hard-pointed projecting spur, like that which is conspicuous in some members of the Plover family. But one specimen of this bird, which is a native of Northern and Western Africa, and that very mutilated, has been obtained in this country. It is a very handsome bird, about the size of the common Wild Goose; it has a

reddish yellow bill, orange feet; the upper parts of the head and neck are brown; the lower parts of the neck, sides of the breast and back, are black; the wings being glossed with brilliant metallic green; the under parts are white.

The single British specimen above alluded to had a narrow escape of utter destruction. 'When killed,' says Mr. Mewburn, of St. Germain's, in Cornwall, who sent the skin to Mr. Bewick, 'it was in a most perfect state, having only one shot in the head. Some gentleman who saw it on the following day requested him (the shooter) to let me have it, which he promised; but, though he knew I was a bird stuffer, he had a wife (unhappy man!) who, from some strange infatuation, thought she could stuff it (presumptuous woman!); but being very soon convinced of her inability, she cut off the wings for dusters (horrible sacrilege!) and threw the skin away (worse and worse!); and it was not till three weeks afterwards that I heard of the circumstance, when I sent a servant, who brought it covered with mud, the head torn off, but luckily preserved, as also one wing, when I had it washed, and put together as well as I was able.'

And this brings us to the end of our catalogue of Geese, about which, on their historical, poetical, and some other respects, it behoves us now to say a few words, before dismissing the subject.

Quill-bearing geese, a blessing on your fens,
Rearing unconscious, earth's best harvest, *pens*;
Ceres but nourishes man's grosser part,
Ye raise the genius, and improve the heart.

These lines of glorification to the quill-bearing fraternity had greater force and appropriateness when they were written, perhaps half a century ago, than they have now, for the steel pen has very much superseded that made from the 'grey goose quill,' although the latter is still to some extent employed in writing. Southey, in that curious melange of wit, and wisdom, and quaint morality, 'The Doctor,' says:—'Of all the birds in the air, and all the beasts in the field, and all the fishes in the sea, and all the

creatures of inferior kind, who pass their lives wholly or in part, according to the different stages of their existence, in air, earth, or water, what creature has produced directly the most effect upon mankind? That which you, reader, will deserve to be called if you do not, after a moment's consideration, answer the question rightly—THE GOOSE!

And then the Doctor goes on to comment on the fact, that among the imports in the Leith Commercial List for June 1830, is an entry of 1,820,000 goose quills, brought by the ship *Ann* from Riga. This was but one consignment of many, probably of the same year, all coming from foreign ports, and exclusive of our home production. Quills were then produced largely in Lincolnshire and some other of our counties. Verily here is food for reflection, and the Doctor might well say, 'O reader, consider, in thy capacious mind, the good and the evil in which that million eight hundred and twenty thousand goose quills will be concerned.'

We must not follow the quaint moraliser any farther than just to observe, that for all the abuse which the shafts of ribald wit have levelled at the Goose (whose feathers, we may remember, winged the shafts of the stalwart bowmen of old), she has been amply revenged, for think of the lawyers, reader! of the bundles of quills in Chancery Lane; and of the government of newspapers under which we have for a long time lived; of the quills dipped in gall and vinegar that have lacerated the hearts of many despisers of the Goose, and spread dissension, and envy, hatred, and all uncharitableness among consumers of goose-flesh at Michaelmas.

CHAPTER XIV.

SWANS:—THE COMMON, THE WHOOPING, THE CHANGELESS,
AND BEWICK'S SWANS.

THE *Cygninæ* is the second family of the Sifters, and consists of a small group of very large birds called Swans, which differ little in their general habits from the *Anserinæ* (Geese) and the *Anatinæ* (Ducks). They are of larger size, have comparatively short legs, and elongated necks, and large and peculiarly shaped bills, of which the breadth is nearly uniform. The Swans are gregarious, migratory, flying in lines when journeying; have a strong and rapid flight; never dive when searching for food, which consists of vegetable substances; walk slowly and ungracefully, but swim with great ease and dignity. The birds constituting the genus *Cygnus*, inhabit chiefly the cold and temperate regions of the globe. Eight species only are known, of which some have a bare fleshy knob at the base of the upper mandible, above which in others that part is flat or concave. There is also a difference in the construction of the wind-pipe, which is only obvious to the scientific naturalist.

THE COMMON TAME SWAN (*Cygnus Olor*), sometimes called the Mute Swan.

THE WHOOPING SWAN (*C. musicus*), sometimes called the Wild, or Whistling Swan; the Elk, or the Hooper.

THE CHANGELESS SWAN (*C. immutabilis*), sometimes called the Polish Swan.

BEWICK'S, and THE AMERICAN SWANS (*C. Bewickii*, and *C. Americanus*).—Yarrell admits the first of the above into his list of British Swans, but Macgillivray excludes it, denying that there is any evidence of its ever having been

caught in a truly wild state in any part of Britain. As it is, however, but a semi-domesticated bird, breeding freely in many parts of these islands, in the moist and reedy wildernesses, where man seldom intrudes upon its privacy, it may now claim a place among British birds, although certainly not an indigenous species, any more than the Pheasant is.



WILD SWAN.

Grand and stately creatures are all the Swans, and this is, perhaps, the most so of any. Who has not paused to admire her, as she,

With archèd neck
Between the white wings mantling, proudly rows
Her state with oary feet,

as Milton describes? It is, in truth, a beautiful and magnificent bird; and one wonders not that this Queen of the Crystal Wave should sit upon her glassy throne surrounded by a halo of poetry and imagination —

The snowy Swan, that like a fleecy cloud
Sails o'er the crystal of reflected heaven
(Some waveless stream), while through her reedy wings
The Zephyr makes such distant melody,
That up we gaze upon the twilight stars,
And think it is the spheral music.

This is but a single specimen of the way in which the poets of all ages have offered tributes of admiration to this enshrined spirit of watery solitudes. We know not who the author of the above may be, but here is a picture painted by James Edmeston, which brings the bird in its leafy home vividly before us:—

Queen of the silent lake,
 Gliding majestic in thy liquid court,
 Deep in the shadowy brake
 Where the imagined water-nymphs resort,
 Where foxgloves hang their bells,
 And oaken bowers their branches intertwine,
 And solitude in leafy covert dwells;
 That sanctuary, snowy Queen, is thine!
 Few violate thy state. The timid deer
 May drink the pure wine as he trots along;
 The forest-loving birds may hover near;
 The nightingale may pour her strain of song;
 Yet Queen, acknowledged, on thy glassy throne
 Thou reign'st in quiet majesty alone.

But we must not linger with the poets, or a whole host of them of every age and clime, from Virgil down to Tennyson, will be filling our imagination with beautiful dreams and fancies, and charming our sense of hearing with sweet melody. At present, we must view this bird in its more matter-of-fact aspect. When the Mute or Tame Swan was first introduced into this country it would be difficult to say. In old times, almost every nobleman's estate, every conventual establishment, and every trade guild or company had its swannery; no royal demesne was complete without it, and many were the statutes and ordinances from time to time made and provided for the preservation of the royal birds, after enumerating the breeding and feeding places of which, a recent writer says:—

England, let us remind the reader, was once the country of Swans. A few are still found on our rivers, on the Thames, the Isis, and the Cam, preserved as relics of former times, as sacred and historic birds, like the pigeons of Venice and the eagles of Geneva. But the day was when every watercourse had its herd of Swans, when the snaring of Swans was regarded as a manly and aristocratic sport. Especially were they found in those level countries where the aquatic

plants grew most freely; they abounded in Warwickshire, Cambridgeshire, and Norfolk. Norwich is still famous for its Swans. No civic festival is complete without its Cygnet as a dish. Why, indeed, should not England become once more, as of old, a country of Swans? The most beautiful of aquatic birds, it is also one of the greatest delicacies. With proper care, the Swan might be rendered almost as common as the Goose; and, besides getting rid of those subtle enemies under water (the aquatic weeds), a thousand tables might be gladdened by the uncovering of a dainty Cygnet for the Christmas dinner.

The most obvious difference between the Mute, half-domesticated Swan, and the wild species with which we are acquainted, is the bill of a rich reddish orange, the base and lore to the eye black, with a prominent black tubercle, or knob, on the upper part in front of the forehead. In the Hooper and Bewick's Swans the two most conspicuous colours of the beak occupy opposite situations, the anterior portion being red, and the base and lore yellow. The Polish Swan has a black base to the bill, but, like the other two last named, it has no tubercles. The young Mute Swan in July has a plumage of dark bluish grey, with a lead-coloured beak: it is not until after the second moult that they become quite white; nor do they breed until their third year. Their nest consists of a large mass of reeds, rushes, and other coarse herbage; it is formed on the ground, generally on an island near the edge of the water. The eggs are six or seven in number, of a dull greenish white. Incubation lasts six weeks, during which time the male attends assiduously upon the female, sometimes taking her place on the nest. At such times he is very fierce and determined, so that it is dangerous to approach the spot.

Domesticated Swans often live to a very great age, as the following example, taken from the 'Montrose Review,' will serve to show:—

The other day, a male Swan which had seen many generations come and go, and witnessed the other mutations incident to the lapse of 200 years, died at Rosemount. He was brought to Dunn when the late John Erskine, Esq., was in infancy, and was then said to be 100 years old. About two years ago he was purchased by the late David Duncan, Esq., of Rosemount; and within that period his mate brought forth four young ones, which he destroyed as soon as they took the water. Mr. Molleson, Bridge Street (in whose museum the bird is

now to be seen), thinks he might have lived much longer but for a lump or excrescence at the top of the windpipe, which, on dissecting him, he found to be composed of grass and tow.

The term Mute Swan, applied to the tame species, does not seem to be quite applicable, if we are to believe Yarrell, who says, in his account of this species: 'The Swan being identified with Orpheus, and called also the bird of Apollo, the god of music, powers of song have been often attributed to it, and as often denied. It is, however, perfectly true that this bird has a soft low voice, rather plaintive, and with little variety, but not disagreeable. I have heard it often in the spring, and sometimes later in the summer, when moving slowly about with its young. Colonel Hawker, in his sporting work, at page 261, has printed a few bars of the Swan's melody, formed out of two notes, C and the minor third (E flat), and the musician, it is said, kept working his head as if delighted with his own performance. With regard to the poetic fancy, that the Swan, however mute at other times, sings its own death-song, in allusion to which many beautiful passages might be cited from the ancient classics and our own older poets especially, an author in 'The Gentleman's Magazine,' after quoting Warburton's opinion that 'the dying song of the Swan is nothing but a fiction, the origin of which is lost in the shades of antiquity,' observes:—'We believe that the ancient poets and mythologists never intended to represent their picture of the *cantus cygni morientis* as true to nature; it was one of their inventions of beauty: they added melody of voice to gracefulness of form, and then dedicated this most beautiful bird to Apollo, at once the god of beauty and melody.'

The mention of the ancient poets reminds us of the oft-quoted line by one of them—*Rara avis in terris, nigroque simillima cygno*, 'a rare bird upon earth, and very like a black Swan.' But Swans with sable plumage are not such rare birds as they supposed; they have been imported into this country from Australia, and are now frequently seen in our ornamental grounds. Instances have occurred in which Black Swans, although little inferior in size and strength to the white ones, have been killed by the latter for intruding on their breeding-places.

But let us now turn our attention to the Wild Swans which visit our shores, especially during severe winters; and first to that most common of the four which some naturalists call *Cygnus ferus*, the Wild or Whistling Swan, the largest and rarest of our winter visitants, though by no means uncommon in some parts of the kingdom. These Swans may generally be seen during the winter on the Scotch and Welsh lakes, and occasionally on the Thames, Southampton Water, and the various inlets of the sea round the coasts. The closeness of their down, and the density of their feathers, render them proof against the ordinary charge of a fowling-piece, and hence a very heavy charge of large shot or slugs must be employed to secure them.

The Wild Swan lacks the dignity of the tame one. He carries his neck erect, without that beautiful curve, 'the line of beauty and of grace,' which characterises his domesticated namesake. His plumage is not so snowlike, and, in sailing along the stream, his wings are carried compactly with his body, and not in that graceful attitude which in the tame bird wins our admiration. There are also marked differences, which lead us to believe that he springs from a different stock. He wants the caruncle, or knob on the upper mandible; his trachea (windpipe) is organised differently, and, as a necessary consequence, his voice is changed. Its tones, though harsh, when heard far above and modulated by the winds, are not unmusical. The Laplanders hear them after their long and gloomy winter, and, as the harbingers of summer, hail them with rapture. The Wild Swans, of which two or three varieties visit us during the winter, depart early, taking advantage of the first favourable wind, on the breaking up of the frosts. Their flight is high, and, with a stiff breeze, uncommonly rapid, being about 100 miles an hour, making their spring voyage a mere day's journey. By far the greater number of them enter the polar regions, Lapland, Siberia, Kamtschatka, and the countries around Hudson's Bay, being their favourite breeding-places. A few breed in the very northernmost parts of the Highlands of Scotland, in the Orkney, Shetland, and Faroe Isles. Powerful as they are, they fall an easy prey to the eagles and more powerful falcons, who

hunt them in couples, wearying out the poor bird by repeated attacks, till at last it quietly resigns itself to death.

With regard to the Wild Swans, much confusion as to identity of species exists; and there is no doubt that the Whooping, or Whistling Swan is often confounded with the Changeless, or Polish Swan—a species of about the same size, being usually sixty inches in length, which is also the common size of the tame Swan, which this species perhaps yet more closely resembles, having, like that bird, the base of the bill black. Yarrell, who first distinguished and described this as a distinct species, states that the London dealers in birds have long been in the habit of receiving from the Baltic a large Swan, which they distinguish by the name of the Polish Swan. During the severe weather of January 1858, several flocks of these Polish Swans were seen pursuing a southern course along the line of our north-east coast, from Scotland to the mouth of the Thames. Since then several specimens have been shot in the country, four of them on the river Medway, near Snodland church. Finding that the Cygnets, as far as observed, were white like the adults, and did not at any age assume the grey plumage borne by the young of most other species, Yarrell called this species *immutabilis*, or Changeless.

The Swan named after that close observer and graphic delineator of birds, William Bewick, has a special mark of distinction; its black bill with a yellow base, the colours being more decided and unmingled than in the Hooper, than which it is about a third less, being about forty-five inches in length. In its habits it is not likely to differ materially from the other Swans which visit us; but opportunities of observing it have been but few, although it has been frequently shot here.

Of the American Swan but a single specimen has been taken in this country: it is the common Swan of North America; was long considered to be identical with the common Wild Swan, and was afterwards confounded with Bewick's, than which it is a larger bird, generally measuring about fifty-four inches. Our account of British Swans

is now complete, and we pass on to another family. Before doing which let us quote Mant's descriptive lines:—

From Iceland, where to horse and hound,
By moulting pinions to the ground
Confin'd, the else aspiring race
Yields objects for the August chase,
The prize of downy plumes to win ;
And thence transferred, the fleece-like skin
Man's frame with grateful warmth arrays.
From wild Kamschatka's cliffs and bays,
From Lapland snows and Norway lakes,
The Swan his airy voyage takes.
Unlike his kindred birds, whose mien
Majestic decks this inland scene,
Content with bounded sway to rule
The precincts of their rushy pool,
And row, with archèd neck sedate,
Their silent and sequestered state ;
Nor sound to break that silence still
Is echoed from their shallow bill.
But less of form, more light of wing,
These high with flight aspiring spring.
The whistle strong, and deep-drawn whoop,
Tell to the ear the passing troop ;
While from their proud aërial height
The plumes, as falling snow-flakes white,
And broad expanse of wing, defy
The sharp ken of the straining eye.

CHAPTER XV.

DUCKS AND THEIR RELATIVES—THE RUDDY AND BURROW SHIELDRAKES; THE MALLARD, AND BIMACULATED DUCK—THE EUROPEAN, GARGANEY, GADWALL, AND PINTAIL TEALS—SHOVEL-BILL—EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN WIDGEONS.

THE *Anatinae*, or Fresh-water Ducks, constitute the third family of the Sisters. They are not divided by any strictly definable limits from the *Anserinae*, or Geese; for although some in either family present strongly-marked characteristics, which divide them from each other, yet they are connected by species so graduating, as to leave no palpable line of separation. Yet do the two groups, taken in the mass, present obvious differences. A summary of their general habits is thus given by Macgillivray:—

The *Anatinae* feed essentially on stems and roots of grasses and other plants, leaves and seeds; but also on mollusca, insects, worms, and occasionally reptiles. They are mostly gregarious and migratory. The males are always larger, and usually differently coloured. The outer webs of some of the secondary quills are highly coloured with silky or metallic lustre, forming a patch round the speculum, or wing-spot. Towards the end of summer, the males assume the plumage of the females, but in autumn resume their proper colours. During the breeding season the males generally continue with the females. The nest is placed on the ground or in holes, rarely on trees. The eggs are numerous, white, greenish, or of some uniform light tint. The young, covered with stiffish down, are active from the first, and presently betake themselves to the water, where they swim and dive with the greatest agility.

Representatives of this family occur in all climates. They frequent marshes, wet places, lakes, and rivers, procure a great part of their

food by reaching at it under the water, but seldom dive unless in sport or to elude their enemies. Their flesh is esteemed as food, and generally has a high flavour.

By the author last quoted, the *Anatinæ* are arranged in four genera.



SHIELDRAKE.

THE RUDDY SHIELDRAKE (*Tadorna Casarca*), sometimes called the Ruddy, or Grey-headed Goose.

THE BURROW SHIELDRAKE (*T. Vulpanser*), also known as the Bergander, the Skelgoose, Skeeling, or Sly Goose, Shieldrake, or Skeldrake, Stockannet, Burrow, or St. George's Duck.

In these two we have the only British representatives of the genus *Tadorna*, the Shieldducks, or Shielldrakes, as they are often called. They might almost as properly be termed Geese as Ducks, and authors differ as to the proper place for them in scientific classification. The male of the first of them is about twenty-three inches long. The head and upper part of the neck are pale grey, the latter tinged with yellow; there is a narrow collar of greenish black; the rest of the neck, and upper and lower parts of the body, are light yellowish red. The hind parts of the back are black, with a greenish gloss; the wing coverts are white, with black and deep purplish green

quill feathers. This beautiful bird is extensively distributed through India, Persia, and the northern parts of Asia: it is found also at the Cape, and in other parts of Africa; and in Europe, in Austria, Hungary, and Russia. Only three or four specimens have been taken in this country. It is sometimes called the Coloured Duck.

The second species is about twenty-four inches in length; it has a curiously-formed bill, with a fleshy knob at the base; the hind and upper part of the neck are black, glossed with green; the lower part of the neck is white, the fore part of the body light red; the rest of the plumage white, except a band on the breast and abdomen, a broad patch on each side of the back by the shoulders, and the first quill feathers, which are black: the second quill feathers are green, with red between, and the coverts of the white tail are brownish yellow. For size and beauty, this bird may stand at the head of our native Ducks. It is a permanent resident with us, being met with, though sparingly, at almost every part of our coasts; it feeds on wet pastures near the sea, and makes its nest in a hole in the sand. It sometimes takes possession of a deserted rabbit burrow, hence one of its common names. Besides dry grass and other herbage, it uses down from its own breast, like the Eider Duck. The eggs are from eight to twelve in number, smooth and glossy, of a reddish white colour. This is a shy and cautious bird, frequenting open places, and not easily approached, except when breeding.

THE COMMON DUCK (*Anas Boschas*), sometimes called the Wild Duck, or Mallard.

THE BIMACULATED DUCK (*A. glocitans*).—The above are the British representatives of the genus *Anas*, constituting the true Ducks. The first named of them is with us the most common bird of the family; it is undoubtedly a native species, and the original of the domestic varieties. Although not one of the most elegantly formed, it is certainly one of the most beautifully coloured of all the *Anatinæ*; the head and upper part of the neck are of a deep glossy green; a narrow white collar divides this from the lower part of the neck, which, with a portion of the breast, is of a dark brownish chestnut, fading off into greyish white towards

the under parts, which are minutely undulated with grey. The fore part of the back is brown, and the wings grey and brown, in waving lines, with black, green, and purple



MALLARD.

patches, and blue and white edgings to some of the larger feathers: the tail feathers are brownish grey, broadly edged with white, the four middle ones being black, and having an upward curve. The bill of the male is reddish yellow, tinged with green, and the feet orange. Such is the Wild Duck which we often see dangling from hooks in poulterers' shops, or from sticks carried across the shoulders of street vendors, whose musical cries carry one's thoughts away to the frozen fens and wild wintry moors where the snow-drift lies deep, and far away in the white landscape may be traced the footsteps of the fowler; or, it may be, we think of a softer and more pleasant aspect of nature, such as Gisborne describes—

To form its haunt by crowding alders veiled,
Where mantling on the still unfrozen flood
Aquatic weeds breathe warm. At our approach
Alarmed, on sounding wing the Wild Duck soars
And plies to distant solitudes her course.

This is the Wild Duck, active and agile, quick of sight and quick of motion, whether on earth, in air, or water; very different from the waddling, quacking, plethoric creature to whom Mrs. Bond addresses the invitation—

Dilly-dilly! dilly-dilly! come and be killed!

Macgillivray furnishes us with the following particulars of the habits of this species:—

The Mallard, which is one of our truly indigenous Ducks, occurs in variable numbers in all parts of the country, being more abundant in marshy and thinly-peopled districts than in such as are dry and well cultivated. It is almost needless to remark that the great improvements which have taken place in agriculture within the last fifty years, and especially the vast extension of draining, have banished it from many tracts where it was formerly very plentiful. Still it is by no means rare in any large section of the country, and in very many districts quite common. In winter it for the most part removes from the higher grounds to the hollows and level tracks, and in frosty weather betakes itself to the shores of estuaries, and even of the open sea. In the Cromarty and Beauly Friths great numbers occur along the shores during the winter and spring, and at night especially frequent the muddy parts, where they feed on worms and mollusca. Around Edinburgh are numerous open ditches and some brooks, to which they resort at night from October to April, when they may be started in great numbers by a person searching their haunts by moonlight. A friend of mine has often shot them on such occasions, and I have myself seen them thus engaged. It being by touch more than by sight that the Mallard obtains its food, the night appears to be as favourable for this purpose as the day, and is chiefly used in populous districts, while in the wilder parts it feeds at least as much by day. Marshy places, the margins of lakes, pools, and rivers, as well as brooks, rills, and ditches, are its principal places of resort at all seasons. It walks with ease, even runs with considerable speed, swims, and on occasion dives, although not in search of food. Seeds of gramineæ and other plants, fleshy and fibrous roots, worms, mollusca, insects, small reptiles, and fishes, are the principal objects of its search. In shallow water it reaches the bottom with its bill, keeping the hind part of the body erect by a continued motion of the feet. On the water it sits rather lightly, with the tail considerably inclined upwards; when searching under the surface it keeps the tail flat on the water, and when puddling at the bottom with its hind part up, it directs the tail backward. The male emits a low and rather soft cry, between a croak and a murmur, and the female a louder and clearer jabber. Both, on being alarmed, and especially in flying off, quack; but the quack of the female is much louder.

When feeding, they are silent; but when satiated, they often amuse themselves with various jabberings, swim about, approach each other, move their heads backward and forward, 'duck' in the water, throwing it up over their heads, shoot along its surface, half flying half running, and, in short, are quite playful when in good humour. On being surprised or alarmed, whether on shore or in the water, they spring up at once with a bound, rise obliquely to a considerable height, and fly off with speed, their hard-quilled wings whistling against the air. When in full flight their velocity is very great, being probably a hundred miles in the hour. Like other Ducks, they impel themselves by quickly-repeated flaps, without sailings or undulations.

Southey, in his 'Doctor,' quotes a nursery book, in which the Duck, being asked whether it was better to be a wild creature, or to live under the protection and care and regular government of man, thus very sensibly replies:—

I was created to be one of the most privileged of God's creatures, born to the free enjoyment of three elements. My wings were to bear me whither I would through the sky, as change of season required change of climate for my well-being; the waters were to afford me pastime and food; the earth repose and shelter. No bird more joyous, more active, more clever, or more delighting in cleanliness than I should be, if the society of man had not corrupted my instincts. Under your regular government my wings are rendered useless to me; I waddle about the miserable precincts to which I am confined, and dabble in the dirt, and grope for garbage in your gutters. And see there are green peas in the garden.

True, O Duck! and what a triumphant result of all that gutter-groping and garbage-eating is arrived at when your delicious body, stuffed with sage and onions, is served up for the delectation of us unfeathered bipeds! Surely the thought of this ought to reconcile you to the deprivation of liberty, and the enjoyment of your natural instincts.

The Bimaculated, or Two-spotted Duck, which belongs to the same genus as the Mallard, is a bird of which only three specimens are recorded to have been taken in this country. It is said to reside principally in the northern parts of Asia; a male, which was figured by Pennant, was taken in a decoy in 1771, and in 1812 a male and female were captured in the same manner near Maldon, in Essex. We need not particularly describe this bird; the male has

two large spots in the neck, from whence its common name is derived.

THE EUROPEAN TEAL (*Querquedula Crecca*), also called the Common, or Green-winged Teal.

THE GARGANEY TEAL (*Q. Circia*), sometimes called the Pied Widgeon, Cricket, or Summer Teal.

THE GADWALL TEAL (*Q. strepera*), called also the Gadwall, or Grey.

THE PINTAIL TEAL (*Q. acuta*), called also the Pintail, Winter, or Lady Duck.



COMMON TEAL.

These four birds constitute the genus *Querquedula*, or Teal group of the Duck family. The points which distinguish them from other birds of the same family are not sufficiently obvious to strike an ordinary observer, and, indeed, naturalists themselves are by no means agreed as to the arrangement of the numerous species of Ducks which are found in Britain, either as visitors or permanent residents. Of the Teals generally it may be remarked that they have longish elliptical bodies, slightly depressed, and moderately full; long and slender necks; oblong, much-compressed heads, moderately arched above. They frequent marshes, lakes, and rivers, and feed on vegetable substance as well as mollusca, insects, worms, and other small animals.

The Common Teal measures about fourteen inches and a half in length. It is a very prettily-marked species; the head and upper part of the neck being chestnut brown, with a green patch behind the eye, so exactly margined with white, as to give it an artificial appearance; one almost fancies it must be sewn or stuck on; the fore neck and part of the breast are yellowish white, with very distinct red spots; the abdomen is marked with undulating lines, and under the tail is a black and two cream-coloured patches. Grey, yellowish white, and black, are the upper part and sides, with a green tinge about parts of the wings. This is the smallest of our native Ducks, and one of the best as an article of food. It has been found breeding in various parts of England, though not in considerable numbers. The nest is formed of a large mass of decayed vegetable matter, with a lining of down and feathers, upon which eight or ten cream-coloured eggs are laid.

The Garganey Teal is a larger bird than the last species, generally measuring about sixteen inches; it is also more beautifully marked, having a white band over the eyes and along the neck, the upper part of which is chestnut-brown, finely barred with white; the throat is black; the upper parts of the body greyish brown, glossed with green; the wing coverts are pale bluish grey, some of the feathers being green, margined with white; the fore neck and part of the breast are pale yellow, with some circular bars; the rest of the breast white, with darker undulations on the abdomen. This is rather a rare species with us; it has been observed in several of the English counties, has occurred in Wales, and also in Scotland and Ireland. It seems to have a very extensive range of habitation, being found in India, Africa, the South of Europe, and thence as far north as Russia and Sweden.

The Gadwall, or Grey Duck, as the name is meant to signify, is a rare bird in this country, sometimes occurring in the winter, but more frequently in the spring, and never in any considerable numbers. It has a reddish brown neck and head, with a grey tint on the sides, the rest of the plumage is chiefly grey, of uneven shades, mottled, and varied with black and white; there is a patch of chestnut

red, edged with dark blue, on each wing, and also one of white, and some of the feathers of the lower part of the back have sandy edgings. The note of this bird is said to be much like that of the Mallard, but more sonorous. The nest is formed of dry grass, and lined with down; the eggs are about eight in number, of a uniform light buff colour. It is found in North Africa, the Caucasus, India, and North America. It is a winter visitor in the islands of the Mediterranean, and is sometimes seen in Switzerland and Sweden, but more commonly in Holland.



PINTAIL.

The Pintail has, from the beauty of its plumage, and length of tail, obtained the name of the Sea Pheasant. It is by some considered the most elegant of our winter Ducks, than most of which it has a more slender form and longer neck. It has a rich chestnut brown head and throat, white breast and neck, grey back, prettily mottled; the tail feathers are black and white, as are the larger wing feathers, and the speculum, or the coloured spot in the side of the wing, common to birds of this family, is of a rich golden green, bordered with black, and having an orange band across it.

Morris, in his beautiful volume on British Game Birds and Water Fowl, says, 'The Pintail is shy and vigilant in its habits, and is very quick in taking and giving alarm. It feeds during the day, as well as in the morning and evening,

and scarcely at all during the night. It seldom dives unless wounded, and then, as Wilson says, will sometimes come up and conceal itself under the bow of the boat, moving round as it moves. When frightened, the Pintails cluster together as they mount, and so afford the sportsmen an opportunity of raking them with advantage; differing in this respect from many other Ducks, which disperse quickly on such occasions. The note of this bird is said to be soft and chattering; Montagu compares it to the feeble sound uttered by a very young kitten; Thompson says its ordinary call-note is a peculiar brief whistle.'

The Pintail measures from twenty-six to twenty-eight inches in length; it builds among weeds and rushes; the eggs, from five to seven in number, are of a greenish white colour.



SHOVEL BILL.

THE BLUE-WINGED SHOVEL-BILL (*Rhynchaspis clypeata*), sometimes called the Common, Blue-winged or Red-breasted Shoveller, or the Broad Bill.—We have here the single British representative of the restricted genus *Rhynchaspis*, the birds belonging to which differ but little from the Teals, except in the expanded form of the bill, from which they obtain the name Shoveller. The bird above-named is a true Duck in its habits, frequenting the muddy shores of rivers or fresh-water lakes, sifting the thin mud through its broad, curiously-formed bill in search

of water-insects, worms, and seeds, of which its food chiefly consists ; it is an awkward walker, a bad diver ; but flies and swims easily, and not without grace of motion. It measures about twenty inches in length, has a black bill about two inches long, and an inch and a quarter broad at the end ; dark glossy green head and throat, white breast, and chestnut red under parts ; the back is brown with a greenish tinge, the under wing coverts are light blue, with a white edging ; the speculum is bright green ; the tail short and much rounded, has the dusky feathers edged with white. This, although a bird of almost world-wide distribution, is by no means common in any part of Britain ; it occurs sparingly during the winter all along the eastern and southern counties of England, in North Wales and Cumberland : a few are known to build regularly in Norfolk. The nest is of dry grass, placed in a tuft of rushes or coarse grass, in some secluded marshy tract ; the eggs, ten or twelve in number, are of a rusty yellow colour slightly tinged with green.



WIDGEON.

THE EUROPEAN WIDGEON (*Mareca Penelope*), sometimes called the Common, or Red-headed, or Golden-headed Widgeon ; the Whew Duck, the Pandle Whew, Yellow Poll, Bald-pate, Whewer, Whim, Whistler.

THE AMERICAN WIDGEON (*M. Americana*).—The Widgeons, placed in a genus by themselves under the name *Mareca*, are in all respects very like the Teals, with the exception of having the bill shorter, proportionably broad, and rather narrowed towards the end. In this respect they differ from all the true Ducks. Of the last of the above species we need say but little, as it is an extremely rare bird with us, and so closely resembles the more common species, that Macgillivray, after examining several specimens of the American Widgeon, declares himself unable to find any characteristic difference which could be depended upon. We will therefore pass over to the European species, which is met with in greater or less abundance over the whole of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland, during the winter. The length of this bird is generally a little under twenty inches; it is very handsome, having the upper part of the head brownish white, the cheeks and upper neck brownish red, dotted with black; the rest of the neck and breast are of a lighter tinge; the upper part of the body and sides below the wings are dark grey, finely waved, and marked with white; on the wing is a large white patch, separated by a black band from the bright-green speculum; the short broad tail is black, the abdomen white.

CHAPTER XVI.

SCAUP DUCKS.—THE RED-HEADED, AND RED-CHESTED POCHARDS
 — THE FERRUGINOUS, BROAD-BILLED, AND TUFTED SCAUP
 DUCKS—THE SURF, VELVET, AND BLACK SCOTERS—THE
 COMMON, AND BLACK-BACKED EIDER DUCKS—THE WESTERN
 DUCK—THE HARLEQUIN, GOLDEN-EYED, AND BUFFEL-HEADED
 GARROTS—THE LONG-TAILED HARELD.

BETWEEN the *Anatinae*, or Fresh-water Ducks, which we have just been describing, are the *Fuligulinae*, Scaup or Sea Ducks, which we have now to describe, there are no precise limits, although the two groups present peculiarities of form and habit which the observant naturalist can discover, and which admit of a separation. Generally, these marine Ducks have the body of a less elongated form, fuller and more depressed; the neck shorter and usually thicker; the head larger, and the hind toe with a conspicuous membranous lobe. Their general habits are thus described by Macgillivray:—

The *Fuligulinae* are essentially carnivorous. Some of them approaching the *Anatinae* in form and habits, frequent fresh water, feed on mollusca, insects, and occasionally plants. Most of them, however, are essentially marine birds, frequenting bays and estuaries, or the shallow parts of the open coasts, and feeding on mollusca, crustacea, and sea-plants, for which they dive. They are all expert swimmers as well as divers, and have a rapid and direct flight; but walk little and ungracefully, owing to the shortness and position of their feet. They are gregarious and migratory. The males are larger, and usually differently coloured. They form their nests on the shores of the sea, on islands, or unfrequented headlands, but also by lakes or rivers, often lining them, or covering their eggs with down plucked from their bodies. The eggs are moderately numerous, smooth-shelled, white or greyish, greenish or bluish, but always of one colour. The young, densely covered with stiffish down, presently betake themselves to the water, where they swim and dive with great expertness. When incubation has commenced, the males desert the females, and flock by themselves.

Representatives of this family occur in all climates, but are more numerous in the temperate and cold regions. Their flesh is little esteemed, being generally very dark-coloured and rank, though a few species are lauded for their peculiarly rich flavour.



POCHARD.

THE RED-HEADED POCHARD (*Aythya ferina*), sometimes called the Red-headed, or Great-headed Poker, or Widgeon; the Dunbird, Duncur or Dunker. THE RED-CRESTED POCHARD. (*A. rufina*)—These are the only two British species of the genus *Aythya*. The second of them, which is remarkable for its tufted crest, occurs but as a rare visitant, and therefore need not occupy our attention; the first arrives on our coasts in considerable numbers, generally about the end of October, some betaking themselves to marshes and parts inland, and others remaining in the bays and estuaries; they are not common in any part of Scotland, but on the eastern shores of England, south of the Humber, are still tolerably plentiful, although the draining of the Fens has rendered them much less numerous than formerly. They have been known to breed in Norfolk, but in no other English county. Temminck says that they are abundant in Russia and Denmark, and even the north of Germany; they nestle in marshy places, and lay ten or twelve eggs of a greenish or yellowish-white colour.

The Common Pochard is about eighteen inches in length; it has the head and upper parts of the neck brownish red; the lower part of the neck and hind part of the back blackish brown; the back greyish white, minutely undulated with dark grey, as are also the lower parts; the abdomen and lower tail coverts are dusky, the tail itself being greyish brown. This bird has not about it any of the bright metallic tints which diversify and enliven many of the wild ducks; the tints of its plumage are mostly sober and subdued, yet it is not devoid of beauty, and being remarkable for the excellence of its flesh, it is much sought by those who decoy or shoot wild fowl for a livelihood.

While here (says Yarrell) it resorts to inland lakes and rivers, as well as the seashore, and though a difficult bird to take in a decoy, on account of its shyness and caution, and the facility with which it dives enabling it to get back under water in the pipe, yet, from being very abundant as a species, great numbers are taken every season. Montagu mentions that the method formerly practised for taking the Pochard was something similar to that of taking woodcocks. Poles were erected at the avenues to the decoys, and after a great number of these birds had collected for some time on the pond to which water-fowl resort by day, and go to the neighbouring fens to feed by night, a net was, at a given time, erected by pulleys to these poles, beneath which a deep pit had previously been dug; and as these birds, like the woodcocks, go to feed just as it is dark, and are said always to rise against the wind, a whole flock are sometimes taken together in this manner; for if once they strike against the net, they never attempt to return, but flutter down the net until they are received into the pit, from whence they cannot rise; and thus we are told twenty dozen have been taken at one catch.

When these ducks are excited or alarmed their note is a low whistle, but at other times it is a rough croak; they are common in North America, dispersed and breeding over the fur countries in the summer, some of them going as far south in the winter as Carolina and Louisiana. In Europe a small number remain to breed in Holland, on the borders of the inland shores which are there so numerous. The nest is placed among rushes, or other coarse herbage, and the eggs, from ten to twelve in number, are of a buffy white colour.

THE FERRUGINOUS SCAUP DUCK (*Fuligula Nyroca*), variously called the Red, Castaneous, White-eyed, and Nyroca Duck; the African Teal; the Nyroca Pochard.

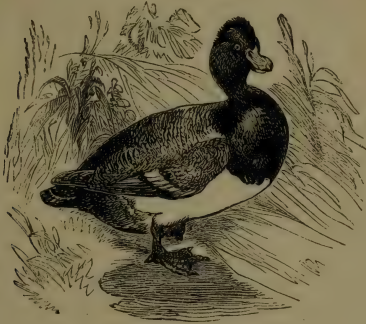
THE BROAD-BILLED SCAUP DUCK (*F. marila*), sometimes called the Spoon-bill, or White-faced Duck.

THE TUFTED SCAUP DUCK (*F. crestata*), called also the Tufted, or Black Duck; the Black Widgeon.

The Scaup Ducks (genus *Fuligula*) differ from the Pochards chiefly in having the body shorter, the bill broader and less elongated, and the membrane of the hind toe wider. The birds of this genus, from the shortness of their legs, and the great size of their hind toes, walk with difficulty, but swim and dive with ease. During the winter season they are essentially marine in their habits; but in the summer, when they resort to the marshes of the arctic regions, they live chiefly in and about fresh water. The first of the above-named three British species is about sixteen inches long; the head, neck, and fore part of the breast and sides are chestnut-red; there is a dusky ring round the middle of the neck. The back and wing coverts are dusky brown, tinged with green; across the brownish-black wings there is a bar of white, the colour of the under part of the body. This species is said to inhabit India, Persia, Egypt, Northern Africa, and Southern Europe; it has been found in Russia and Iceland. Temminck says it is a regular migrant in Germany, but in this country it appears as an occasional visitant only. According to Yarrell, it is not unfrequently to be seen in the London markets, and the individuals there exposed generally come from the eastern counties between the Thames and the Humber. Temminck describes it as nestling among the rushes that border the large rivers and marshes, and laying nine or ten eggs of a greenish white colour. It feeds on small frogs, aquatic plants, and seeds; sometimes on small fishes.

The Broad-billed Scaup Duck is larger than the preceding species, generally measuring about twenty inches in length. The hind and upper part of the neck are greenish black; the rest of the neck, the fore part of the

back and breast, and hind part of the back, are black; the wing coverts greyish white, with dusky undulations; the breast and sides, with the outer wing feathers, are white; the under parts are dusky; tail brownish grey.



SCAUP DUCK.

The Scaup Pochards, as these birds are often called, arrive on our coasts about the end of October, and continue to increase in numbers until the middle of the winter. They are most plentiful in the estuaries and along the flat shores, where they are sometimes met with in large flocks.

Macgillivray says that this bird is very rarely met with in fresh water, its food consisting chiefly of marine testaceous mollusca, for which it dives like the Scoters, often mingling with them and other species. Its flight is moderately quick, usually performed at no great height above the water, on which it alights abruptly on its hind part. Although it runs without difficulty, it usually prefers diving to escape pursuit; and so expert is it in this act, that it is very difficult to shoot it in the water. It swims strongly, sitting rather deep, and in diving remains long before it emerges. Montagu states that both male and female have a habit of tossing up their heads and opening their bills, which in spring is continued for a considerable time, while

they are swimming and sporting in the water, and they emit a grunting sort of cry. At high water they are seen resting in flocks at some distance from the shores, which they approach when the tide recedes.

In the end of March and beginning of April they disappear from our coasts, and are said to resort to the northern parts of Europe, where they rear their young. The species occurs also in North America, frequenting in winter the large rivers as well as the bays, and feeding partly on vegetable substances. When kept in confinement, it readily eats grain. Montagu says, that 'during the summer months, when the larvæ of various insects are to be found in the mud at the bottom of the pond, these birds are continually diving; but they are perfectly contented with the barley, and will become so tame as to come to the edge of the water for a bit of bread.'

The Tufted Scaup Duck is about fourteen inches long; it has a broad flat bill, enlarged towards the end, of leaden grey colour. The head and upper parts of the neck are purplish black; the upper parts of the body are also black, but, being minutely dotted with white, it has a greyish appearance; there is a white band across the wings, and the breast and sides are white, the abdomen being dusky. The feathers upon the head of this bird are elongated into a large drooping crest, which gives it a singular appearance.

The Tufted Pochards arrive here in October, and depart in April. They are generally dispersed over the country, frequenting lakes, pools, and marshes, and the still parts of rivers, where they feed chiefly on insects, testaceous mollusca, and worms, in quest of which they dive. They very seldom appear in flocks of large size, from two to six or eight being more commonly met with. Like the other species of this genus, they have a rapid, direct flight; swim with rapidity, dive expertly, and are with difficulty shot on the water. They rise with ease on the wing, and alight abruptly. When the fresh waters are frozen they betake themselves to the sea, and subsist chiefly on bivalve mollusca, such as cockles, mussels, &c. Even during open weather, they are often seen in the shallow bays and estuaries. Although the flesh is good, they are not in much request as an article of

food, although often seen in the markets. They generally return to the arctic regions to breed; but some, according to Temminck, remain in the temperate climates. In winter they are dispersed over the western and southern portions of Europe, but are not met with in America.

THE SURF SCOTER (*Oidemia perspicillata*), sometimes called the Black or Surf Duck, or Great-billed Scoter.

THE VELVET SCOTER (*O. fusca*), the Velvet or White-winged Black Duck; the Black Diver, or Double Scoter.

THE BLACK OR COMMON SCOTER (*O. nigra*).

The Scoters (genus *Oidemia*) are all remarkable for their black colour, and bills having a protuberance in front. They are birds of large size, having full and depressed bodies, moderately long, or thick short necks; large oblong compressed heads, rather flattened above. They inhabit the open sea or estuaries during the greater part of the year, feeding chiefly on bivalve shell-fish, for which they dive in shallow or moderately deep water. Their homes in summer and breeding-places are the arctic regions, where they build their loose bulky nests on the shores of the sea or lakes, or in marshes, lining them with down; their eggs are numerous and white.

All the Scoters swim and dive with ease, and remain long under the water; they are gregarious, except in the breeding season, and even then the males which have left the females keep together in flocks.

Of the above-named British species, the first is much the rarest, only two or three specimens having, as far as we know, been killed in this country, although small flocks are said to have been seen in and about the Orkney Isles. It has a plumage of deep black glossed with blue, with a patch of white on the top of the head, and another on the hind neck; the feet and part of the curiously-shaped bill are flesh-coloured. Audubon describes this species as abundant in winter on the eastern coasts of America, extending as far southward as the mouth of the Mississippi. In Labrador he found a few in summer, and came upon a female sitting upon her eggs. The term *perspicillata*, or spectacled, applied to this bird by some naturalists, has

reference to two black patches surrounded with orange at the base of the bill. About twenty inches is the general length of this species.

The Velvet Scoter is considerably larger than the other species of its genus, being about twenty-one inches in length; its plumage is black, glossed with blue and green, and it is distinguished from the other Scoters by a white band across the wings. This bird is a winter visitant only to the shores of the British Islands. It has been killed, says Yarrell, in the vicinity of Dublin, in Cornwall, and Devonshire. Specimens were obtained in the London market during the winters of 1832 and 1837. It has also been procured in Suffolk and Norfolk. Mr. Dunn describes it as rare in Shetland, but common in Orkney, where it arrives in the beginning of winter, and retires again very early in the spring: it frequents the ponds in flocks of ten or twelve, generally feeding in the middle or deep water, and in the streams of the tide. It is remarkably shy, and great caution is required to approach it. It is a common bird in Denmark, Norway and Lapland, where it breeds: it is also found in Iceland.

The Velvet Scoters are said to live solely on bivalve molusca, after which they dive with great expertness. Macgillivray gives this picture of their habits:—

When the weather is not boisterous, they fly out to sea in the evening, and return toward the shore or shallows early in the morning, coming generally in small flocks of from five to fifteen or twenty. They fly very low, or at a moderate height, with considerable speed, moving their extended wings quickly, and on arriving at a suitable place relax their speed a little, and alight on their hinder end, the body being kept oblique. They then trim themselves, look into the water, and commence their operations. They sit lightly on the water, swim with moderate speed, dive by sinking head foremost, rather than by plunging violently, like the fish-pursuing divers, and remain from one to three minutes under. It is of course beautiful to see a flock of any birds emerging in succession; and I have several times been so near them on such occasions, as to see pretty distinctly the colours of their bill and feet. If disturbed by the approach of a boat or other vessel, they generally dive; but often also take to wing, and remove to some distance. They rise heavily from the water, ascending at a very small angle, and striking the surface with their wings for some yards. It is, perhaps, when on wing that they look

most beautiful, the conspicuous white patch on their wing contrasting with their black plumage. Thousands of these birds may often be seen in the Frith of Forth, often intermingled with black Scoters, and sometimes with other birds.

The Black Scoter is somewhat smaller than the Velvet, the average length being about eighteen inches; the upper mandible of the bill has a rounded compressed knob at the base, which is more conspicuous than that of the other Scoters. This species arrives on our coasts soon after the middle of autumn, and is to be seen here and there often in considerable flocks along the whole eastern side of Britain, from Shetland and Orkney, where it is not uncommon, to its southern extremity. Its habits are essentially the same as those of the Velvet Scoter. Audubon found the nest of this bird also in Labrador. 'It was placed at the distance of about two yards from the margin of a large fresh-water pond, about a mile from the shore of the gulf of St. Lawrence, under a low fir, in the manner often adopted by the Eider Duck, the nest of which it somewhat resembles, although it was much smaller.' He afterwards found a female with some young ones, of which she took such effectual care that none fell into his hands. On several occasions, when they were fatigued by diving, she received them all on her back, and swimming deeply, though very fast, took them to the shore, where the little things lay close among the tall grass and entangled bushes.

THE COMMON OR WHITE-BACKED EIDER (*Somateria mollissima*), sometimes called St. Cuthbert's Duck, or Dunter Goose.

THE KING OR BLACK-BACKED EIDER (*S. spectabilis*), often called the King Duck.—The Eider Ducks (genus *Somateria*) are birds of large size, having bodies of an elliptical form, and considerably depressed; they have moderately long and thick necks, and large oblong flattish heads. They inhabit the cold and frigid zones of both continents, living in the open sea, or in channels or bays, during the greater part of the year, and feeding on bivalve shell-fish, for which they dive. In summer most of them betake themselves to the arctic regions, where they nestle

on the shores of the sea, on islands, or on the turf of rocky places, forming a bulky nest, lined with down from their own breasts, and laying a number of large, smooth, greenish white eggs. Their flight is steady, direct, moderately rapid, and performed by quick beats. They swim and dive expertly, remain long under the water, and are more or less gregarious, even in the breeding season. The down which lines the nest and is intermingled with the eggs, has been plucked by the female from her breast, and is collected in large quantities in some northern localities.



COMMON EIDER.

St. Cuthbert's Duck, as the first of the above species is often called, from the circumstance of its breeding on a rock which bears the name of St. Cuthbert's Isle, situated on the Scottish coast, although indigenous to some of the northern parts of England, is known only as a rare winter visitant to the southern parts of the kingdom, its most southerly breeding place with us is the Fern Islands, on the northern coast of Northumberland; and there it would no doubt become very plentiful, but for the indiscriminate plunder of its eggs, which are taken, with those of the Gulls, Guillemots, &c., and sold for a mere trifle to the inhabitants of the main land. The usual number of these eggs is five, of a fine asparagus-green colour, and

about three inches in length. The bird itself measures from twenty-four to twenty-seven inches in length; it is of a clumsy shape, but is remarkable for the beauty of its plumage, which is soft and dense, and on the breast especially so. The head is black above, with a white band over it; the hind part of the cheeks and nape are pale green, the breast, sides, abdomen, and rump black, the foreneck cream-coloured, and the rest white.

The food of the Eider (says Macgillivray) consists of bivalve mollusca, which it obtains by diving, as well as of crustacea, fishes and the roe of both. I am not aware of its ever feeding on vegetable substances in its natural state, and yet when domesticated, it has been found readily to eat grain. This remarkable facility of transition from an animal to a vegetable food, appears to be very common to this family of birds, and is said to produce a corresponding change in the character of their flesh as an article of food. That of the Eider, under its common regimen, is, I think, fully as palatable as the flesh of the mallard. The flight of the bird is direct, steady, and moderately rapid. It swims well, sitting lightly, although from the flatness of its body, it seems to sink considerably, and in diving, is capable of remaining a considerable time under water. In all these respects it differs little from the Scoter and Fuligulæ. It is difficult to shoot, being wary, and diving rapidly.

That enterprising female traveller Madame Ida Pfeiffer gives us the following graphic picture of the home of the Eider Ducks in Iceland:—

The little island of Vidoe, about a mile from Reikjavick, is generally mentioned by travellers as the principal resort of the Eider Ducks. On the 8th of June I visited the place, and found myself greatly disappointed in the number of birds assembled there; for although I saw many sitting quietly on their nests on the slopes of the meadows and between the rocks, so far from being in thousands, I doubt if there were in all more than a hundred or a hundred and fifty nests. The tameness of the Eider Duck, while brooding, is very extraordinary. I had always looked upon the wonderful stories I had heard on this subject as fables, and should do so yet, if I had not been an eye-witness to the fact myself. I approached, and laid my hands on the birds while they were sitting; yes, I could even caress them without their attempting to move from their nests; or, if they left them for a moment, it was only to walk off for a few steps, and remain quietly waiting till I withdrew, when they immediately returned to their station. Those whose young were already hatched, however, would beat their wings with violence, and snap at me with their bills when

I came near them, rather allowing themselves to be seized than desert their broods. In size they resemble our common duck; their eggs are of a greenish grey, rather larger than hens' eggs, and of an excellent flavour. Each bird lays about eleven eggs. The finest down is that with which they line their nests at first; it is of a dark grey, and is regularly carried off by the Icelanders with the first eggs. The poor bird then robs itself of a second portion of its down, and lays a few more eggs, which are also seized; and it is not till the nest has been filled for the third time that the ducks are left unmolested to raise their young brood. The down of the second, and particularly that of the third hatching, is much lighter than the first, and of an inferior quality. I was so cruel as to appropriate some of the down and a few eggs myself. I had no opportunity of seeing the down and eggs collected from between the inaccessible rocks and cliffs, where they are only reached by the peasants by means of ropes, and at the peril of their lives.

The King Duck, as the second of the above-named species is often called, is so very similar in form and style of colouring, as well as in its habits, to the common Eider, that in most respects the description of one applies to the other. The dark and light colours of its plumage are less intermingled, and more decided, than in those of the latter bird, and it has a remarkable protuberance at the base of the bill, which the other has not. It is a much rarer bird, but few specimens having been obtained in Britain. Mr. Bullock states that he has found it breeding in Papa Westra, one of the Orkney Islands, in the latter end of June; the six eggs were yellowish white, rather less than those of the Eider, and like those of that bird covered with its own down; they were placed on a rock overhanging the sea. Audubon, who describes this bird very graphically, says that it rarely advances further west than the neighbourhood of the Bay of Boston, where a few have been known to breed in company with the Eider Duck along the coast. He saw some in Labrador, but could not find any nests.

STELLER'S WESTERN DUCK (*Anas* or *Stellaria Dispar*), sometimes called the Pied Stellaria, is a rare and beautiful species, classed by some naturalists with the Eider Ducks. It inhabits Asia and North America, and was originally described from specimens obtained by Steller in Kamtschatka, where it breeds upon rocks inaccessible to man. Yarrell,

in his 'British Birds,' gives a figure of it, and describes it as about nineteen inches long. Its claim to a place in the British fauna rests upon a single specimen shot on the 10th of February, 1830, at Caistor, near Yarmouth in Norfolk; this is now in the British Museum.

THE HARLEQUIN GARROT (*Clangula Histrionica*), sometimes called the Harlequin Duck.

THE GOLDEN-EYED GARROT (*C. Chrysophthalma*), sometimes called the Golden-eyed, or Gowdy Duck, Pied Widgeon, or Whistler.

THE BUFFEL-HEADED GARROT (*C. albeola*), also called the Buffel-headed, or Spirit Duck; the Marionette.

The Garrots, as the name *Clangula* applied to the genus implies, are noisy birds; the species of which the genus is composed are inferior in size to the Eiders and Scoters; from which they are distinguished by having the bill shorter, and destitute of the fleshy protuberances about the angles and base of the bill; they have full depressed bodies, short thick necks, and large compressed heads, like most other Ducks. They inhabit the cold and temperate regions of the north, feed chiefly on mollusca, for which they dive: they have a quick direct flight, sit rather lightly on the water, and are more active than the Scoters, which they closely resemble in their general habits.



HARLEQUIN.

The Harlequin Duck, as the first of the above-named

British species of this genus is called, has obtained that title from its parti-coloured plumage. A very beautiful bird this, having the upper parts of the body dusky greyish blue; there is a triangular white patch before each eye; a round spot of the same behind each ear; a band along the side of the head, almost reaching to another, running down the back of the neck, across the lower part of which there is a narrow collar, and a broader semicircular sweep lower down; these, with the white patches on the wings, being mostly shaded or bordered with light red, or black, over the greyish blue and green ground on which they appear to be painted, form as pretty a harlequin as well can be conceived, and render this indeed 'a very duck of a bird;' it does not often give us a chance to see and admire it in Britain, where but a few specimens have been taken. The length of this species is about seventeen inches; it is said to be of common occurrence on the eastern coasts of North America, and to breed in suitable places from the Bay of Fundy to the highest latitudes visited. It is beautifully figured in Morris's 'Game Birds and Water Fowl.'

The Golden-eyed Duck is a species which visits this country in small flocks every winter, and is well known on most parts of our coast; it resorts to and feeds in the estuaries, or on rivers which fall into the sea; it is sometimes obtained in inland waters with other wild fowl. The male is about nineteen inches long; it is a handsome bird, having the head and upper part of the neck a deep glossy green with purple reflections; there is a large white patch of an oval form on each side between the cheek and bill; the lower neck, with the breast, sides and abdomen, are white, the elongated feathers of the latter edged with black, which is the colour of the upper parts of the body; the wings having broad white spaces across them. There is a difference of opinion among naturalists respecting this bird, some asserting that three distinct species are confounded under the common name of Golden-eye; but it seems likely that these are merely varieties dependent on age and nature.

It does not appear that any of the Golden-eyes have been

found breeding in Scotland, where they are most likely to be found if anywhere in Britain; like most of the Ducks, they betake themselves in summer to arctic regions.

The Buffel-headed Duck is decidedly one of the handsomest of our winter visitants, although there is not much variety in the tints of the plumage, which are simply black and white, except the head and upper neck, these being deep green with a purple gloss. A triangular patch of pure white, passing from below the eye on each side to the back of the head, gives this bird a very curious appearance, the peculiarity of which is increased by the elongation of the feathers of the head, forming a crest erectable at pleasure.

This is a smaller species than the Golden-eye, measuring about fifteen inches in length; to study its habits we must betake ourselves to America, where it is said to be common. Only three specimens are known to have been taken in this country, one of which was obtained in the autumn of 1841, in Orkney, by Mr. Mummery, curator of the Museum of Natural History at Margate. Yarrell says he has reason to believe that other examples of this Duck have been seen in winter on the extensive waters near Yarmouth, and that it is the bird called by the boat-shooters there the true Morillon; these men call the Golden-eye 'Rattle-wings.'

Audubon says, 'The Marionette—and I think the name a very pretty one—is a very hardy bird, for it remains at times during extremely cold weather on the Ohio when it is thickly covered with floating ice, among which it is seen diving almost constantly in search of food. When the river is frozen over, they seek the head waters of the rapid streams, in the turbulent eddies of which they find abundance. Possessed of a feeling of security, arising from the rapidity with which they can dive, they often allow you to go quite near them, though they will then watch every motion, and at the snap of your gun, or on its being discharged, disappear with the swiftness of thought, and perhaps as quickly rise again within a few yards, as if to ascertain the cause of the alarm. Their note is a mere croak, much resembling that of the Golden Eye, but feebler. At the approach of spring, the males often swell

their throats, and expand the feathers of the head, while they utter these sounds, and whilst moving with great pomposity over the waters.'

THE LONG-TAILED HARELD (*Harelda glacialis*), sometimes called the Long-tailed, or Sharp-tailed Duck, the Calloo, Coal-and-Candle-light.

We have here the sole British representative of a genus to which the name *Harelda* has been given by Leach and others, which name Macgillivray opines is a misprint for *Haveld*, or *Havelda*, said to be the Icelandic appellation of the bird.

This is a peculiarly Arctic bird, nestling upon the very borders of the Polar ice, hence its specific name, *glacialis*. Audubon found it breeding in Labrador, and describes the nest as formed of grass, and lined with down; the eggs from six to eight, about two inches in length, of a pale green colour, when fresh approaching to apple green.

Although the length of this beautiful bird to the end of the tail is twenty-five inches, it is not in reality larger than many ducks that do not measure so much, the tail being much longer than that of any other member of its family. Black and white, with their intermediate tints, with a little brown, are its chief colours; it is a pretty regular winter visitant with us, although it does not come in large numbers, nor is it known to breed here. It is described as playful, lively, and quarrelsome, and uttering, chiefly in calm frosty weather, the syllables *a-a-alloo* in a clear tenor key, the last higher and more acute. From this cry is derived one of its common names in the Scottish isles, where they also call it Coal-and-Candle-light, from another of its cries.

CHAPTER XVII.

GOOSANDERS:—THE BUFF-BREASTED, RED BREASTED, AND
HOODED GOOSANDERS—THE PIED SMEW.

THE BUFF-BREASTED GOOSANDER (*Merganser castor*), sometimes called the Greater Goosander, the Dun Diver, the Saw-bill, or Jack-saw.

THE RED-BREASTED GOOSANDER (*M. serrata*), sometimes called the Red-breasted Merganser, the Harle or Earl Duck, Siolte.

THE HOODED GOOSANDER (*M. cucullatus*), sometimes called the Hooded Merganser.

The Mergansers or Goosanders (for the terms appear to be synonymous) form a very distinct family, although intimately allied on the one hand to the *Anatinae* and *Fuligulinae*, and on the other to the Plovers and Cormorants. The term Merganser, signifying Diver-Goose, indicates sufficiently their aquatic habits and large size. The species composing this family are few in number, but four are known as European birds, and these all have a place in the British fauna. Three are named above; the fourth is not associated with them, because it is placed in a distinct genus.

The Mergansers are remarkable for their long curved bills, which have serrated or saw-like edges, admirably adapted for holding their slippery prey, the fish, after which they dive deep down in the water. The Dun Diver or Saw-bill, named first on our list, measures about twenty-six inches in length; the head and upper part of the neck

are a dark glossy green; the lower neck, breast, and abdomen a pinkish buff colour; the rest of the plumage black, grey, and white.

The Goosander, or Buff-breasted Merganser, which is widely dispersed, in summer, over the northern regions of both continents, is at that season very seldom met with in Britain, and that only in the remotest parts and islands of Scotland. The number of individuals there seen is very much inferior to that of the Red-breasted Mergansers. In the outer Hebrides, where I resided several years, although I have several times met with them on the lakes in summer, I never found a nest; but Mr. John Macgillivray, who visited these islands in the summer of 1840, was more fortunate, or more observant, for he found it pretty common, breeding by the larger lakes, and occasionally by the sea, as near Loch Maddy, in North Uist. In Orkney, on the other hand, it is only a winter visitant, leaving very early in spring. In winter it is met with sparingly in all parts of Scotland, as well as in many districts in England, in the southern parts of which it is, however, of very rare occurrence. In Ireland also, it occurs 'in very limited numbers.' At all seasons it prefers lakes and rivers to estuaries, but may be seen, even in summer, fishing in the sea, especially in the lochs or indentations so common in Scotland. Being a heavy bird, with the body much depressed, and the plumage not remarkably full, it has the appearance of sitting deep in the water. It dives with extreme agility, remains long under the surface, and swims there with great speed. Its food consists of fishes of various kinds, but with us more especially trouts, of which eighteen were found in the gullet of one found on the Tweed in the winter of 1838. Being shy, vigilant, and active, it is not easily obtained, as it neither admits of a near approach, nor usually remains above water until the shot reaches it. In rising on wing, it proceeds at a low angle, striking the water with its feet or wings to the distance of several yards. Its flight is rapid, like that of a Duck, and performed at a considerable height, when it is travelling toward a distant place. The male emits a rough grunting cry, which, however, is very seldom heard. In the northern estuaries or bays, pretty large flocks are sometimes seen; but it is much more common to meet with the bird in pairs, or even singly, in most parts of the country. Although not very unfrequently seen in our markets, it is not there held in estimation, its flesh being coarse, and having the fishy flavour of that of the Divers and Cormorants, to which the Mergansers are allied in their mode of living.

The nest is said to be placed near the water, among the herbage, and to be composed of dry grass, sedge, fibrous roots, and other similar materials, with a lining of down plucked by the female from her breast. As observed by him in America, it is described by Mr. Audubon as being 'very large, at times raised seven or eight inches

on the top of a bed of all the dead weeds which the bird can gather in the neighbourhood. Properly speaking, the real nest, however, is not larger than that of the Dusky Duck, and is rather neatly formed externally of fibrous roots, and lined round the edges with the down of the bird. The interior is about seven and a half inches in diameter, and four inches in depth. There are seldom more than seven or eight eggs, which measure two inches and seven-eighths in length, by two inches in breadth, are of an elliptical form, being nearly equally rounded at both ends, smooth, and of a uniform dull cream colour.

The next species, the Harle, or Earl Duck, as some term it, is inferior in size to the former, seldom measuring more than twenty-four inches in length; like its congener, it has a dark glossy green head and upper neck, and a black and grey back and sides; but the abdomen is pure white, and the fore part of the neck is light red, with dusky streaks. Like all the Mergansers, it has the feathers of the head elongated into a crest, which is not commonly erected; two separate tufts are longer than the rest. The naturalist we have so often quoted will furnish us with a graphic description of the habits of the bird:—

The summer residence of this species (says Macgillivray) is in the northern parts of both continents, from the colder temperate regions to the border of the polar ice. In winter it advances southward, in America as far as the Gulf of Mexico, and in Europe to the coasts of France, as well as to Switzerland and Italy. It seems, therefore, somewhat strange that in England it is of rare occurrence at that season in the southern districts, while on the friths and lakes of Scotland it is not uncommon. In the latter country it is generally dispersed, but in summer is not met with south of the Moray Frith on the eastern side, or to that of the Clyde on the western. In winter it betakes itself chiefly to streams and lakes, resorting to the sea when they are frozen, and in summer it prefers the same situations, although it may often be seen on the sea. In the outer Hebrides, in March, April, and part of May, and again in autumn, I have seen very large flocks in the small sandy bays, fishing day after day for sand-eels. They sit in the water much in the manner of the Cormorants, but without sinking so deep, unless when alarmed, and advance with great speed. It is a pleasant occupation to an idle scholar or wandering ornithologist to watch one of these flocks as it sweeps along the shores. I have many times engaged in it, both with the desire of shooting some of them, and of studying their manners, which are very graceful. You may suppose us to be jammed into the crack of a rock, with our hats off, and we peeping cunningly

at the advanced guard of the squadron, which is rounding the point at no great distance. There they glide along, and now, coming into shallow water, they poke their heads into it, raise them, and seem to look around, lest some masked battery should open upon them unawares. Now one has plunged with a jerk, another, one here, one there, and at length the whole flock. Now start up, and if you wish a shot run to the water's edge, and get down among the seaweed, behind a stone, while I from this eminence survey the submersed flock. How smartly they shoot along under the water, with partially outspread wings, some darting right forward, others wheeling or winding, most of them close to the sandy bottom, but a few near the surface. Some flounders, started by the hurricane, shoot right out to sea without being pursued. But there, one is up, another, and I must sink to repose in some hole. How prettily they rise to the surface! one here, another there, a whole covey at once emerging, and all without the least noise or splutter! But they are far beyond shot range. However, having come near the next rocky point, they now turn, dive in succession, and will scour the little bay until, arising here at hand, they will be liable to receive a salute that will astonish them. A whole minute has elapsed, half another; but now one appears, two, many, the whole flock; and into the midst of them pours the duck shot, while the noise of the explosion seems to roll along the hillside. In a twinkling all are down, save six that float on the water, four dead, one spinning round, and the other striving in vain to dive. In less than two minutes, they are seen emerging, more than a quarter of a mile out at sea, and presently again they are out of sight. On such occasions they seldom fly.

Excepting the Smew, to be presently described, the Hooded Goosander is the handsomest of its family; its glossy, greenish-black head, with a distinct triangular white patch, extending from the eye to the back of the semi-circular crest, reminds one strongly of the Buffel-headed Duck; only this is a larger bird, usually measuring about seventeen inches in length. From the black back, a scythe-shaped triangle of the same hue passes on each side far over the purely white breast, and another, less distinct, lower down. The sides are yellowish brown, finely undulated with black, and green reflections play about the darker tints of the bird, like the shimmer of sun-lighted waters. Very few specimens have been taken in Britain, or even in Europe. The bird is well known in North America.

THE PIED SMEW (*Mergus albellus*), sometimes called the White Nun, the Pied Diver, the Vane Widgeon.—This bird

differs from the Mergansers in having the bill so much shorter and broader as to resemble a Duck. For this, and some other reasons which we need not adduce, it has been placed in a distinct genus, called *Mergus*, of which it is at present the sole representative. It is a very beautiful and remarkable-looking bird, about seventeen inches in length, with a long, decurved white crest, a patch of greenish black on the fore part of the cheek, and a band of the same along the side of the occiput, or hinder part of the head, giving something the appearance of a hood, hence the name White



SMEW.

Nun applied to this species, whose back is black, shaded with grey; neck, shoulders, and under parts pure white, which is the prevailing hue of the whole plumage.

This bird is said to be a native of the arctic regions of both continents, but of much rarer occurrence in America than in Europe. It visits chiefly the eastern and southern parts of Britain, being very rare north of the Humber. Montagu describes it as 'by far the most plentiful species of Mergansers that frequent our (southern) coasts and fresh waters in the winter, but, we believe, it has never been known to breed in this country. It is naturally shy, and readily takes wing, being as expert in air as it is in water, where, indeed, if surprised, it is with great difficulty shot, by reason of its incessant diving. At the time of writing

this account, there are two White Widgeons, as the full-plumed males are sometimes called by the natives, on a piece of fresh water not very distant from us, but too wary to be shot. The females and young birds are called, in the northern parts of Devonshire, Vare Widgeon, from a supposed similitude to the head of a Weasel, which is there denominated a Vare.'

According to Temminck, this bird nestles on the borders of lakes and rivers, and lays from eight to twelve whitish eggs.

Bishop Mant's lines on Goosanders may fitly conclude this account of the family :—

Now too with sharp and sawlike bill
Cylindrical, the season chill
From their far dwellings in the north
Calls duly the *Goosanders* forth :
Apt on the salt deep's ooze to ride,
And swiftly o'er its surface glide ;
More apt the yielding wave to rive,
Deep through the liquid chambers dive,
Then with long pause, and far away
Again the emerging tuft display :
Him with the feather's pendent crest,
Neck purpled green, and *Ruddy Breast* ;
With breast of white, the *Diver Dun* ;
And fancy-liken'd to the nun
Of Carmel, though a jet-black hue
Inlay his white, the white-robed *Snew*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DIVERS :—THE CRESTED, RED-NECKED, HORNED, AND EARED GREBES — THE DABCHICK. LOONS :—THE RING-NECKED, BLACK-THROATED, AND RED-THROATED LOONS.

AT the commencement of our account of the Water Birds, it will be remembered we stated that they were arranged in three great divisions, viz., Sifters, Divers, and Plungers. We have now come to the second of these divisions, called by naturalists *Urinatores*. These are birds especially adapted for diving and swimming, both in and on the water, feeding essentially on fishes obtained in the living state, and pursuing their prey in its native element, into which they dive for that purpose, not from on wing, but when scattered on its surface. True, the Mergansers, and other of the birds already described, do this; but most, if not all, of these feed occasionally on other substances than fish, and have natural affinities with birds which could not well be placed in this division. As we have before had occasion to observe, in those natural-history arrangements which are necessary, the line of demarcation between different orders and families cannot always be distinguished, especially by those unacquainted with anatomical structure and other circumstances which guide systematists, whose judgement we may not question. Pass we then to the Divers, of which order but nineteen species occur in Britain, although most of them are exceedingly numerous in individuals. Macgillivray divides them into four families, of which we take first the Grebes.

THE CRESTED GREBE (*Podiceps cristatus*), sometimes called the Tippet Grebe, or Crested Duck; the Gaunt Cargoose.

THE RED-NECKED GREBE (*P. rubricollis*), also called the Grey-cheeked Grebe.

THE HORNED GREBE (*P. cornutus*), also called the Slavonian Grebe, or Horned Dobchick.

THE EARED GREBE (*P. auritus*).

The family *Podicipinæ* includes the Grebes, of which the above are British, and some allied species: they are birds of peculiar aspect, readily distinguishable from all others, having a body of an elliptical form and much depressed, especially behind, where it forms, when the legs are extended, a broad thin edge: the neck is long and slender, the head small, oblong, compressed, and gradually tapering behind. They have remarkably soft and blended plumage, with a silky gloss on the lower parts; their tails are mere tufts of small downy feathers, called, in scientific language, *plumules*; and their heads and necks are generally ornamented with crests, ruffs, or tippets, which are developed in spring, and disappear in autumn. They are true *palmipedes*—that is, having feet palmated, or shaped like the palm of the hand with the fingers spread, only showing but three lobes, or divisions, instead of four, as in the human hand. These lobes are connected by a web, which gives them great power in swimming.

The Crested Grebe is the largest species of its genus, the male measuring about twenty-four inches in length; it has a sharp-pointed beak, about two inches long, and a long slender neck, to which the head, in consequence of the ruff or tippet extending far beyond the neck on either side, and, as it were, cutting it off, scarcely seems to belong. The ruff, like the crest, of which there are two tufts longer than the rest, is of a rich dark brown; the neck behind, with the back, wings, rump and short tuft-like tail, are greyish brown, and all the rest of the plumage is a delicate white, from the silky appearance of which the bird has obtained the name of the Satin Grebe. Its skin is in great request on the Continent, being used for making muffs, trimmings

for pellisses, &c. ; a good skin will sell for six or eight francs, and in the vicinity of the lake of Geneva, which the bird frequents in autumn, shooting parties are made up for the



GREAT CRESTED GREBE.

purpose of obtaining specimens. This sport, called *La Chasse du Grébe*, is referred to by M. Necker, in his paper on the Birds of Geneva.

The female Grebe is said sometimes to bear her young on her back when danger threatens them, and Bishop Mant thus feelingly deprecates the pursuit of the bird under such circumstances :—

Unused aloft to soar, but fleet
 With oarage of the handlike feet,
 Most apt the liquid mass to strike
 With powerful stroke, direct, oblique ;
 See, where across the lake she rows
 Her crested form ; and, as she goes,
 Full of maternal fears and cares,
 Lodg'd on her back her nestlings bears,
 The *Female Grebe* ! Her glossy breast
 Sleek plumes of satin white invest,
 Wave-proof ; and hangs her shoulders down,
 Down, back, and wings, of dusky brown
 A mantling tippet. Ah ! forbear,
 Nor with intent remorseless dare,
 Thou who with gun and gun-craft tried,
 Creep'st cautious by the water side—

Dare not, while thus engaged, with rude
Assault to sever from her brood,
And kill, or worse, disabled maim,
Charg'd with her young, the anxious dam.
'Tis vain! The deadly shot is sped,
And on the pool the dam outspread
Floats lifeless! From her shoulders flung
In the death-throe, the orphan young
Disperse, and seek, as best they can,
Refuge from persecuting man!
Believing beast and fowl decreed
By heav'n in man's behoof to bleed,
The Muse nice feelings o'er-refin'd,
Affects not; but to duties kind
Alive, the sympathetic heart
Mourns with involuntary start;
Thus rent affection's tender pledge,
And holds such death a sacrilege!

The Red-necked Grebe is about eighteen inches long, and differs from the foregoing species in having the bill stouter, and differently coloured, and the body proportionately shorter and broader: it, too, has a crest on the head, with two elongated tufts, and a ruff on the cheeks and neck, the back of which, like the top of the head, are a rich dark brown, almost black, while the cheeks, chin, and throat are a fine bluish grey, the feathers mostly margined with white; the back, wing coverts and rump, are dark brown, and the neck in front a fine chestnut red; the sides under the wings, the flanks, and under tail coverts are greyish brown, and the lower part of the breast and belly silky white.

It does not appear that the bird has been found breeding in any part of Britain, although in winter it is not more rare with us than the Crested Grebe, which it closely resembles in its habits. It is said to be common in the eastern parts of Europe, but of rare occurrence in the western. According to Audubon, it is met with in the winter season from New York to Maine, and Dr. Richardson found it very common in the fur countries of North America.

The Horned Grebe is about fourteen inches long; it has two large light red occipital tufts, and an ample black ruff; the upper parts of the body are greyish black, the lower

silvery white; the fore part of the neck and sides of the body red. This bird, which in its winter plumage is sometimes called the Dusky Grebe, is not very uncommon in Scotland in the cold seasons, but is very rare indeed in any part of Britain in summer. It is not known to breed with us, going mostly far north for that purpose. 'Some,' says Audubon, 'remain within the limits of the United States during the whole year, rearing their young on the borders of ponds, particularly in the northern parts of the state of Ohio, in the vicinity of Lake Erie. Two nests which I found were placed at a distance of about four yards from the water's edge, on the top of broken-down tussocks of rank wood. The materials of which they were composed were of the same nature, and rudely interwoven to a height of upwards of seven inches. There were five eggs in one nest, seven in the other; they were about one inch and three quarters in length, of a uniform yellowish cream colour. The nests are not fastened to the weeds around, nor do I conceive it probable that they could be floated, as various writers assert they are at times.'

The Eared Grebe is somewhat smaller than the species last described, seldom measuring above thirteen inches in length; it is distinguished from all the other Grebes by the peculiar form of the bill, which is curved a little upwards at the end, and depressed at the base. This bird has a short black ruff, and a tuft of elongated orange-red feathers springing from behind each eye—hence the name Eared; the upper parts are greyish black, the lower silvery white, the sides light red, streaked with white. Macgillivray says:—

Little can be said about the habits of this species as distinguished from those of the preceding. It is said to be abundant in the northern parts of Europe, to occur also in America, and to be less addicted to betake itself to the sea than the larger species, its principal food being aquatic insects, small fishes, and seeds. During snow, however, it is occasionally met with in our estuaries and along the coasts, and in winter is not very rare in many parts of England, although I have not seen many that were obtained in Scotland. Montagu states that it inhabits the fens of Lincolnshire, where it breeds, making a floating nest, and laying four or five white eggs.

Rusticus, of Godalming in Surrey, thus writes of this bird:—

The Eared Grebe is resident in one locality, Forked Pond, a very pretty lake-like piece of water, on the Pepper-harrow estate. A portion of the pond is in the park, and here its margin is wooded and picturesque; but towards the silk-mills, at the Hammerponds end, it is more exposed. On this pond I have observed these rare Grebes many following seasons, not in great numbers, but two or three pairs, and they always keep out in the middle of the pond. Mr. Henry Maline has a fine pair, which were probably killed at this pond, having been sent him by the late Mr. Howard, of Elsted, but without the requisite information as to locality.



DABCHICK.

THE EUROPEAN DABCHICK (*Sylbeocyclus Europæus*), sometimes called the Dibber, Didapper, Dobchick, Little Ducker.

This, which is the Little Grebe of some authors, has been separated from the genus *Podiceps*, and placed, with some American cousins, in a distinct genus, bearing the above sybilline title, whereat the familiar Dabchick would be no little astonished if he ever heard it applied to him. A curious little fellow is this; fond of ducking and diving, and performing all sorts of antics in the water. He differs from the Grebes chiefly in having the body short and full, and the bill not so long as the head. The male bird is about ten inches in length; the upper part of the head and throat are black; the sides and fore part of the neck chestnut; the chest and sides of the body dusky; the upper

parts greenish black; the wings are mostly greyish brown, with white markings.

This is the commonest as well as the smallest of all the British Grebes, if a Grebe it may be called. It remains with us through the whole year, inhabiting rush-grown lakes or fish-ponds, and the weedy parts of rivers during summer; but in winter it is more frequent on small streams.

Rusticus, of Godalming, states:—

I have occasionally, though but seldom, found the Dabchick's nest in the weeds near the banks of this island. It is large for the bird, but of very inconsiderable thickness, and always wet, so that the eggs are for ever in a sort of puddle. The eggs are about as big as black-birds', but rather longer: when only two or three, they are white and uncovered, but when more they are carefully concealed frequently with the flowers of the common reed; and this is not to be done at a moment's notice, when you drive the bird from her nest; there are no reeds near enough for that; but she sits on the eggs, reeds and all; and the eggs are then of a dingy brown.

LOONS.

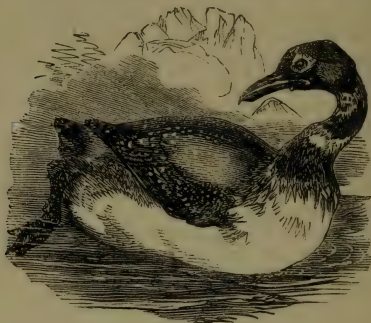
These birds constitute not only a genus, termed *Colymbus*, but also a family, *Colymbinæ*, which contains, perhaps, fewer species than any other to be found in the systems of arrangement adopted by naturalists. We know of but three species, to be presently enumerated; they form a well-defined and easily distinguishable genus, and may be generally described as having long narrow bodies, tapering at both ends; long and stout necks, and oblong compressed heads, very narrow behind; bills about the length of the head, flattened, tapering, and pointed; feet differing from the Grebes in having the toes connected by regular webs; tail, although small, formed of regular feathers, and not downy plumules; wings small, narrow, acute, much like those of the Auk family. In the celerity with which they dive and proceed under water, they are not excelled by any aquatic birds, hence the name Divers is often especially applied to these members of the great order of Divers.

THE RING-NECKED LOON (*Colymbus glacialis*), sometimes called the Great Northern Diver; Greatest Speckled Diver;

Immer, Emmer, or Ember Goose; Gunner; Naak; Sea Herds; Man; Cobble.

THE BLACK-THROATED LOON (*C. arcticus*), known also as the Black-throated Diver.

THE RED-THROATED LOON (*C. septentrionalis*), called also the Red-throated, or Speckled Diver, the Sprat Loon.



GREAT DIVER.

These are all three known as British birds; the first is large, being about thirty-six inches in length; the head and neck are deep bluish green, glossed with purple; there is a patch on the throat, and a broad ring of white, incomplete in front, on the neck, crossed by streaks of black; the upper parts are black; the middle part and shoulders being marked with white spots, as are also the wings, there being two on each feather; the lower neck is streaked black and white, which is the colour of the lower parts, with the exception of a dusky band across the abdomen. The numerous white spots upon a black ground, which cover the back and sides, give the bird a very remarkable appearance. Macgillivray describes the Great Diver as very common along the shores of the outer Hebrides, from the middle of spring to the end of May. They disappear in the beginning of June, or sometimes earlier, and do not reappear in autumn, or at least in the same plumage, for those seen in winter have no

spots on the back. At that season the bird is met with from the most northern parts to the south of England, but it is of rare occurrence beyond the middle parts of the latter country.

The Black-throated Diver is smaller than the preceding species, being about thirty-two inches long; the upper part of the head and the hind neck are light grey, the fore part and sides of the head darker; the fore neck is purplish black, having a transverse interrupted band across it; the sides and lower part of the neck are dusky, with white streaks; the upper parts are black, glossed with green and shaded with brown: there are the same white spots, many of a square form, as on the wings of the former species, and the lower parts of the body are white, with a dusky band along each side.

This bird begins to appear along our northern coasts about the end of September, frequenting the bays and estuaries, but in small numbers. In winter it is seen, here and there, along all the coasts of Britain, the number of young birds greatly exceeding that of the adult. Most of them depart by the end of April, a few only remaining to breed in the more northern parts of Scotland and some of its islands. The habits of this bird are so much like those of its congener, as described by Macgillivray, that we need not dwell upon them. Its eggs are of a brownish olive colour, sprinkled all over with black and dark brown. It is said to breed in Sweden, Norway, Lapland, and the extreme north of Europe generally, as well as in North America.

The Red-throated Diver is considerably less than the last species, from which it is readily distinguishable by the form of its bill—that having a slight curve upwards—as well as by the broad band of deep orange red on the fore part of the neck, the sides of which, with the head and the throat, are bluish grey, the upper part of the head being marked with dark spots, and the nape, hind, and lower parts of the neck streaked with black and white; the upper parts of the body are greenish black, and the lower parts white, but the sides are dark grey, and there is a grey band across the hind part of the abdomen. The white spots on

the back and wings of the other Divers are here altogether wanting. About twenty-six inches is the usual length of this bird, which is perhaps the commonest of its genus with us; numerous individuals being met with on most part of our coasts from the beginning of October to the middle of May, but more especially in bays and estuaries, the young birds being proportionably more numerous on the southern than on the northern shores. In the end of spring, having paired, they retire northward, the greater number probably betaking themselves to the arctic regions, although many remain to breed by the island lakes of the Scottish Highlands, as well as on the Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland Islands.

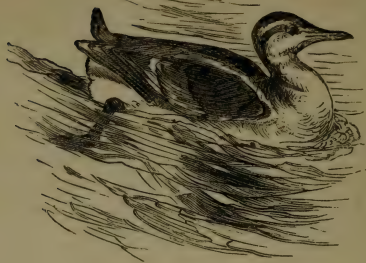
The nest is placed on an island or tuft, or among the herbage near the margin, or even on the stony beach, of a lake or pool, and is composed of grass, sedge, or heath, or other easily-procured plants, generally in small quantity, and neatly put together. The eggs are two or three in number, of a pale olive-brown colour, and spotted or dotted with umber. All the Divers, from having their legs short, and placed very far back, find locomotion on land very difficult; indeed, they cannot really walk, only push themselves along on their bellies. Hence their nests, when placed at any distance from their proper element, the water, can generally be discovered by the distinct track which the old bird makes in wriggling itself along to and from the pool, lake, river, or estuary in which it feeds and refreshes itself. While incubating, the male is said to continue with the female, and to take her place on the eggs occasionally. If deprived of their precious charge, both birds may be heard for several evenings lamenting their loss with loud melancholy cries. Their usual notes are harsh, and resemble those of the Gannet.

CHAPTER XIX.

AUKS, GUILLEMOTS, &c.:—THE FOOLISH, BLACK, BRIDLED, AND BRUNNICH'S GUILLEMOT—THE LITTLE ROTCHE—THE RAZOR-BILL — THE GREAT AUK—THE PUFFIN.

IN the family *Alcinæ* are included the Auks, Guillemots, Rotches, Razor-bills, and Puffins. They differ from the Loons in having the body very compact, the neck short and thick, the head large and broadly ovate, and the feet not placed so far back.

These birds (says Macgillivray) belong entirely to the northern hemisphere, and inhabit the seas and coasts of the cold and temperate regions of both continents. Fitted by their compact form and dense short plumage to bear all the vicissitudes of weather, they seek their food as well on the open sea as along the shores. Their short firm wings, while they enable them to fly to great distances, are also the principal instruments by which they pursue under water the small fishes and crustacea on which they feed. In summer vast multitudes betake themselves to the most northern regions, while others of the same species occupy suitable places in the northern, temperate, and intermediate zones. Thus the Razor-bill, Guillemot, and Auk, are to be found in June and July, equally in Scotland, Feroe, Iceland, and Spitzbergen. It is on the shelves, or in the crevices of precipitous rocks that they breed, few or none of them forming a nest, though some of them conceal themselves in burrows. In most of the species only a single very large egg is laid. The young soon betake themselves to the sea, and toward the middle of autumn they and the old birds remove southward, few of them however proceeding so far as the Mediterranean. They are seldom seen on shore, unless at their breeding-places, the position and form of their feet being very unfavourable to walking, and on the rocks they stand in a very inclined position. Eight species rank as British,



COMMON GUILLEMOT.

THE FOOLISH GUILLEMOT (*Uria Troile*), sometimes called the Common Guillemot; the Lum, Lungy, Lami or Lavy; the Marrot, Murre, Murse; the Sea Hen, Scout, Skiddaw, Scuttock; the Tinkerseer, or Willock.

THE BLACK GUILLEMOT (*U. grylle*), also called the Greenland Dove, or Doveky; the Little or Spotted Guillemot: the Puffinet; the Sea Turtle; the Tystie, or Tystey.

THE BRIDLED GUILLEMOT (*U. lachrymans*), sometimes called the Ringed or Ring-eyed Guillemot.

BRUNNICH'S GUILLEMOT (*U. Brunnichii*).

We have here the British members of the genus *Uria*, formed by the Guillemots, which are active and lively birds, inhabiting the northern seas. They form no nests, but deposit their large pear-shaped eggs, on the bare surface of rocks, and there their young crouch, fed by the old birds until they are sufficiently fledged to take to the water, and begin to forage for themselves. Their eggs afford good eating, but the flesh of both old and young is rank and unpleasant.

The common Guillemot, it will be seen, is a bird with many an *alias* to its name: what they all mean we cannot pretend to explain. It has a stout, black, sharp-pointed, and somewhat decurved bill, not unlike that of the Raven. It usually measures about seventeen inches in length. The plumage is greyish black above; the sides of the head and

fore part of the upper neck tinged with brown ; the lower parts are white, the sides being streaked with black. In summer the whole head and throat are brown ; in winter the sides of the head, behind the eyes and throat, are white.

Why this bird has been called the *Foolish* Guillemot we have been unable to discover. It certainly does not look very wise as it sits, almost bolt upright, on a ledge of rock above the roaring and foaming sea, keeping warm, or endeavouring to do so, its single egg, which it seems that the slightest movement would precipitate into the watery gulf beneath. One is tempted to wonder why it did not choose some more safe and sheltered spot for the work of incubation. But doubtless He who conveyed to the bird its instinctive knowledge has ordered this, like all other things, wisely and well. Rusticus says :—

The Guillemot, or Willock, as it is here called, sits with its egg under its wing or pressed to one side of its breast, and always on the same side, so that a mark on the breast of the bird plainly shows the situation of the egg whilst she is sitting. After the day when the egg is laid it is very rarely left, and it is only for this one day that the collectors have much chance of getting it. They tell you that when the bird has once begun sitting, she will never suffer herself to be robbed ; but that when all chance of saving the egg is gone, she rolls it off the ledge, and flies away. This story is partly true, but there is some doubt whether she acts on the true dog-in-the-manger system of smashing her egg because no one else shall have it ; its position is so ticklish that, when the bird is forced to take flight to avoid capture, she may very easily upset her charge, and pitch it over the precipice, in the mere flurry attendant on the act of self-preservation.

Man is not the only robber this poor bird has to fear. The Gulls and Ravens are ever on the alert to secure her eggs. This is horrid unkind of neighbours, but perhaps not inconsistent with our own practice. The Gulls are for ever scanning the face of the cliff, hoping to catch a glimpse of an unprotected egg. Directly a Gull has found one, he charges point blank at its small end, using his head as a lance ; the huge egg, thus pierced, sticks on his beak, and he flies away as though he was carrying a great pear in front of his head. In this way he sucks out all the goodness while on the wing, and drops the shell when empty. These shells, with a great hole at one end, may often be found upon the downs above, and naturalists profoundly assert that stoats and weasels are the aggressors, thus assigning to those lithesome quadrupeds a marvellous extent of cliff-scaling capability.

The testimony of Knox also might be cited to show that the scarcity of Guillemots, and other large water-birds, in some of their old breeding-places, may be attributed to the high prices given by collectors for their eggs.

The Black Guillemot is inferior in size to the common species, generally measuring about thirteen inches in length. The plumage in summer is altogether black or dusky, with the exception of a large patch of white on each side. In winter the white overspreads a great part of the plumage; so that this bird, like many others, assumes a very different appearance in the two seasons. The moult takes place in autumn, and is completed by the beginning of November. Early in spring another moult commences, which is completed by the end of April. In these changes it is the dress of the summer, or breeding season, which is always the handsomest; and that of this bird is no exception to the rule, being glossed with green above, and warmed with a fine red tinge below.

Like others of its genus, this is an open sea-bird, frequenting the rocky shores only for a limited period during the season of incubation. It is more confined to the northern parts of the British islands, than the common Guillemot, from which it differs in some of its habits.

The other two species mentioned in the foregoing list are both rare birds with us, about which little need be said. The name Bridled appears to have been given to one on account of a white mark which encircles the eyes, and passes down the sides of the head. In every other respect it closely resembles the common species; fifteen or sixteen inches is its usual length. Some naturalists, indeed, consider it but a variety of the same species; it is sometimes called the Ringed Guillemot.

The species named after the naturalist Brunnich, who first described it in his *Ornithologia Borealis*, is at once distinguished from any other British member of this family by the shortness, stoutness, angularity, and greater depth of its bill, from which peculiarity it is sometimes called the Thick-billed Guillemot. In its habits, as far as known, it does not differ from the common species, which it closely resembles in form and the colour of its plumage. But one

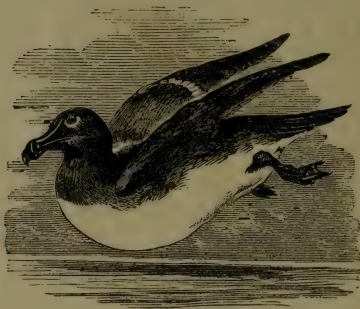
specimen appears to have been taken in Britain, and that was in Orkney.

THE LITTLE ROTCHE (*Mergulus Alle*), known also as the Little Auk, Little Guillemot, or Sea Dove.—This is the only species yet described of the genus *Mergulus*. Although intimately allied to the Auks and Guillemots, it cannot with propriety be placed in either of these genera, on account of the shortness, thickness, and peculiar convexity of its bill. Without much variety in the colours of its plumage, which are black, white, and grey, with a brownish tinge about the throat, fore neck, and wing-coverts, this may be called a pretty little bird. Its length is a little over nine inches. Its habits have not been minutely described. In summer it is found in high northern latitudes, and, in winter, retires southward, along the coasts of both America and Europe, sometimes visiting our shores in considerable numbers. Macgillivray observed two individuals perched on the cliffs of the Bass Rock one day in the month of May, and it is said to breed at St. Abb's Head. Audubon describes its egg as remarkably large for the size of the bird, measuring nearly one inch and five-eighths in length; it is of a dull, uniform, pale greenish brown.

THE COMMON RAZOR BILL (*Utamnia Torda*), sometimes called the Common Auk, Falc, Gurfel, Marrot, Murre.

The Birds of the genus *Utamnia* differ from the Guillemots chiefly in the form of the bill, and in having the tail pointed. In every other respect, such as food, habits, &c., they are the same. The above is the only species which visits the shores of Britain; it is distinguished mainly by its broad, compressed bill, somewhat resembling the blade of a knife. The head and upper part of the neck all round is brownish black; the upper parts of the body greenish black; the lower parts white; a narrow white line runs from the eye to the bill on each side; across the bill are four grooves, one of which is white. The length of this bird is about seventeen inches and a half. It makes its appearance in autumn, in great numbers, in the bays and estuaries of Scotland and England. As the season advances,

the Razor Bills become more numerous to the southward, and, in winter, the western coasts are almost entirely deserted by them. In the firths and other inlets, when frequented by shoals of young herrings or other fishes, they



RAZOR BILL.

are often seen in great abundance, and, in fine weather, are occasionally met with on the open sea. Towards the end of spring, they collect into parties, and proceed to certain breeding-places, which are always abrupt cliffs along the shore, or precipitous islands, where they nestle along with the Guillemots and Kitiwakes.

This species, besides inhabiting the northern parts of Europe, and, in winter, appearing on the coasts of Britain, Holland, and France, occurs equally in North America, where, in winter, it extends as far southward as New York. M. Audubon found it breeding on the islands of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and on the coast of Labrador. Other observers have met with it in Greenland, Iceland, Spitzbergen, and, in general, dispersed over the arctic seas.

The eggs of this bird are laid in the beginning of May; they are excessively large, averaging three inches in length, of an oblong shape, somewhat pyriform, but not so pointed at the small end as that of the Guillemot. The ground colour is greyish or brownish white, much blotched or clouded, and spotted and sprinkled with deep brown or

black, with spots of paler brown and light purplish blue interspersed. The young come out in about four weeks.



THE GREAT AUK.

THE GREAT AUK (*Ulca impennis*) sometimes called the Gare Fowl, or Penguin.

This bird now alone represents the divided genus *Ulca*, which, in the Linnæan arrangement, includes also the Rotche, the Puffin, and the Razor Bill. Many authors still consider this and the Little Auk, as the latter bird is often called, as congeners.

This species is about as large as a goose, measuring about twenty-five inches in length. Its bill is shaped much like that of the Little Auk just described, and is black, with white grooves across it. The head, throat, sides, and hind part of the neck, with all the upper parts, are black; the throat and sides of the neck tinged with chocolate brown; the wings with greyish brown; the head, hind neck, and back, are glossed with olive green; there is a large oblong patch of white before each eye; the tips of the smaller quills, and all the lower parts, are white. In winter, the brownish black of the fore neck is replaced by white.

This very remarkable bird is an inhabitant of the arctic seas; it is rare in Britain, not more than ten individuals having been obtained here. One of these was taken in a

fresh-water pond two miles from the Thames, in Buckinghamshire. It appears to be getting a more and more rare bird everywhere. Of late years, none of our arctic voyagers have met with it. M. Audubon was informed that it breeds on a low rocky island to the south-east of Newfoundland, but had no opportunity of ascertaining the accuracy of the report. Various authors state that it lays an egg about five inches long, pear-shaped like that of the common Guillemot; yellowish white, with numerous angular lines and blotches of brownish black. A pair of these birds is said to have bred in Papa Westra, one of the Orkneys, for several years. When Mr. Bullock visited the islands in 1813, he found that the Queen of the Auks, as the natives called the female, had just been killed. The King he chased in a six-oared boat for several hours, but, although he several times got near him, so expert was the bird in his native element, that it was impossible to shoot him. 'The rapidity with which he pursued his course under water was almost incredible.'

Different indeed is the appearance presented by the Penguin on land from that which it presents when in the water, where its movements are all grace and agility. Out of its proper element, it looks awkward, stupid, and lumpish, floundering about in a most undignified manner, or sitting motionless upon its hinder parts, with its body bent a little forward, and staring vacantly and helplessly around. We shall not soon forget the ludicrous effect of a stuffed Penguin belonging to a friend, which he had, to conceal an ugly gap in the neck, and keep the head on, adorned with a white shirt-collar and a black stock. The poor bird, becoming rough, and ragged, and unsightly, was afterwards turned out of doors—set upon the step, for any compassionate person to take who chose. What became of it we never heard. Perhaps it may be now adorning the home of some lover of natural history, who looks at it admiringly, and caressingly addresses it as 'my dear Booby.' But our great sea-bird, we must remember, stupid and lumpish as he looks, is one of a family of much importance and utility. From whence do we get the guano which has been found so useful of late years as a fertiliser for our land? It is

chiefly the dung of Penguins—not, perhaps, the particular species with which we are familiar, but of one or more of its near relatives, probably the Patagonian, or King Penguin, a much larger bird than ours, which is widely distributed throughout latitudes south of the line. Mr. G. Bennet, in his 'Wanderings,' &c., has described a colony of these birds, extending even to thirty or forty acres, situated at the north end of the Macquarie Islands, in the South Pacific Ocean. 'The number of Penguins collected together in this spot is immense, but it would be almost impossible to guess at it with any near approach to truth; as, during the whole of the day and night, 30,000 or 40,000 of them were continually landing, and an equal number going to sea. They are arranged, when on shore, in as compact a manner, and in as regular ranks, as a regiment of soldiers; and are classed with the greatest order, the young birds being in one situation, the moulting birds in another, the sitting birds in a third, and the clean birds in a fourth, &c.; and so strictly do birds in a similar condition congregate, that should a bird that is unclean intrude itself among those that are clean, it is immediately ejected from among them.

But it is from the island of Ichaboe, situated upon the western coast of Africa, that our chief supply of guano has been obtained, and, recently, the bodies of the dead birds have become a marketable commodity.

THE ARCTIC PUFFIN (*Mormon Arcticus*), variously called the Buikir,* Bottle-Nose, Coutlener, Gulder head, Mullet, Pope, Sea Parrot, Tammy Norrie. We have here a variety of choice epithets, some perhaps more expressive than elegant; we trust that no reflection on *Pio Nono* is intended in one of them, nor on Joe Smith and his followers in the name given to the Puffin genus, viz. *Mormon*.

In truth, the Puffins are comical-looking birds, and we wonder not that all kinds of odd names should have been applied to them. There are several species known, but only one is in the list of British birds. They are smaller than the Auks or Guillemots, which they resemble in form and structure, as well as in habits. In one thing they differ from the other birds of the family; they dig holes in the turf

in rocky places, in which they nestle and rear their young ; their eggs are white, and generally there is but one in each nest, if nest it can be called.



PUFFIN.

Our Mr. Puffin, who measures about twelve inches in length, looks, as he stares you in the face from his rocky ledge, as if he had put on a mask to frighten you. The bill is like an enormously disproportionate nose, ridged or furrowed, and painted of various colours, the first, close in from the base, being a dull yellow, the second greyish blue, and the rest of the bill bright red ; it has a horny appendage above, and an elongated narrow plate below the eye, and looks exactly as if it could be taken off and put on at pleasure. The upper parts of the plumage are greyish black, the lower parts white, the sides of the head greyish white, the throat grey, and there is a band of brownish grey on the neck ; so that all the bright colours are lavished on that extraordinary appendage, the bill, which is as broad at the base as it is long, and of a roundish triangular shape.

The Puffins make their appearance on our coasts from the middle of April to the beginning of May, presently betaking itself to various breeding stations scattered here and there, from the British Channel to Shetland, and the remote

Hebrides. On the stupendous cliffs of Dover, Montagu tells us, and such other places, they burrow like rabbits, if the soil is light, but more frequently take possession of rabbits' burrows, and lay their eggs many feet under ground. So Mant describes it :—

Where deeply in the sandy shore
Their holes the burrowing Puffins bore,
Sharp as the riving ploughshare, thrill
The furrow with their knife-like bill ;
Scoop outward, as with hollow hand,
With palmate feet the muttering sand ;
And form a subterranean keep,
A winding chamber, long and deep.

Speaking of the birds of St. Kilda, Mr. John Macgillivray says, 'By far the most abundant species is the Puffin, which breeds in the crevices of the rocks, as well as in artificial burrows, in almost every situation, sometimes at a considerable distance from the water's edge. The bird is taken by the fowlers in two ways ; when in its nest, by dragging out the bird at the risk of a severe bite, and when sitting on the rocks, by means of a noose of horse-hair attached to a slender rod. The latter mode of fowling is generally successful in wet weather, as the Puffins then sit best upon the rocks, allowing a person to approach within a few yards, and as many as three hundred may be taken in the course of a day by an expert bird-catcher.'

Yarrell says that 'the Puffin visits various parts of Scandinavia, the Feroe Islands, and Iceland ; it has been found as far north as Nova Zembla and other high northern latitudes. East of this country, it is taken on the coasts of Holland and France ; a single specimen is recorded to have been taken at Genoa in the winter of 1823.'

Pennant mentions that, when the time for migration arrives, such young birds as cannot then fly are deserted. The eggs of the bird are white, about two inches and a quarter long, sometimes spotted with pale-ash colour. The young are hatched after a month's incubation, and at the end of another month or five weeks are able to follow their parents to the sea. Puffins, when on land, rest upon the whole length of the

foot and heel, and in consequence walk with a waddling gait, but they fly rapidly for a moderate distance, and are most expert swimmers and divers. Macgillivray says, 'They sit lightly on the water, swim with celerity, turn about with great smartness, dive headlong, and fly under water in pursuit of small fishes and crustacea, or betake themselves to the bottom in search of mollusca. The form of the bird is admirably adapted for this sort of pastime.'

Now let us northward set our sail,
And scud before the favouring gale,
Where by lone Man the racing tide
Runs swift, and on its southern side
That islet stands, by dweller known
None save the ocean tribes alone ;
And they the burrowing race, whose lair
Usurped the tribes of ocean share.
There may she pause, and see them spring,
Waked by the morn on clanging wing,
And darken, as with yell and scream
They wheel around, the orient beam :
But chiefly note the Puffin sheer
O'er the scarce dimpled wave career,
And fly at once, and run and swim,
With wing and foot and pendent limb,
And scarcely in the water dip
The unwet web or pinion's tip ;
A compound motion, undefined
As gliding on against the wind
With restless course the livelong day
They forage for their watery prey.

CHAPTER XX.

CORMORANTS, &c.:—THE GREAT AND GREEN CORMORANTS —
THE GANNET.

WITH these birds we get into another family, the *Pelecanina*, which has but three British representatives, not one of which is a true Pelican. Speaking of the characteristics of the birds included in this family, Macgillivray says :—

The habits of these birds are very different; for while the Cormorants pursue their prey much in the same manner as the Mergansers and Loons, and the Archingers are still more strictly Urinatorial, the Pelicans combine the characters of the Urinatorial (diving), and Mersatorial (plunging) birds. The Gannets fly about in quest of food, plunging upon it from on high; the Frigate Bird ranges over the seas, with scarcely rivalled speed of wing; and the Tropic-birds resemble Terns in their mode of flight. They all feed on fish, however, and all are very voracious. They nestle on rocks, bushes, or trees; form a clumsy, ill-constructed nest; lay a small number of bluish white eggs, crusted over with an irregular layer of calcereous granules. The young, at first almost naked, and generally black, continue in the nest until able to fly. Only two genera have representatives in Britain.

THE GREAT CORMORANT (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), sometimes called the White-headed, White-spot, or Crested Cormorant, the Great Scart, or Scarve, Coal Goose, Brougie.

THE GREEN CORMORANT (*P. graculus*), known also as the Black, or Crested Cormorant, the Green Scout, the Shag, Scart, Scarv, or Scarbh.

The Cormorants (genus *Phalacrocorax*) are birds of

large or moderate size, with long, rather full, depressed bodies; long and stout necks; rather large heads, and bills about the same length as the head, straight, rather slender, and compressed.

Species of this genus occur on almost every rocky coast, and often on low coasts having trees along the water's edge. In searching for food, which consists entirely of fish, they seldom go far from land. They swim and dive with extreme agility, sink in the water when alarmed, have a moderately quick low flight, perch on rocks or trees, and nestle in both situations. Cormorants never fish by plunging from on wing; they generally, in diving, leap out of the water in a curve, and descend with great force; they are such voracious feeders that their name has become a synonym for gluttony.



GREAT CORMORANT.

The length of the Great Cormorant is about three feet; the head, neck, lower parts, middle and hind part of the back are greenish black; the fore part and sides of the back, with the wing coverts, are greyish brown; there is a dingy white band on the throat, extending upward to the eyes, which are green; there is a crest on the head, of greenish black; the face and long slender hooked beak is yellow. In lonely places on the shore, or a little way out

in the water, this bird may be seen perched on rocks, or sitting on the ledges of mural cliffs, watching for fish.

Macgillivray says that—

The Great Cormorant occurs in considerable numbers here and there on all our rocky coasts, frequenting bold headlands, high cliffs, and insular crags. It generally keeps apart from the crested Cormorant, and when the two species occur in the same locality, assumes a more elevated station, the other betaking itself to the caves, or perching on the lower shelves. At certain states of the tide—chiefly, I think, about low water, and not at any particular time of the day, for I have observed them early in the morning, at noon, and in the evening—the Cormorants may be seen standing lazily on the rocks, some with outspread wings, as if sunning themselves, or drying their plumage; others reposing, with the head under one of their wings, or directed forwards on their retracted neck. Should a boat approach them, they soon become alarmed, raise one foot after the other, and throw their long necks about in a singular manner, straining themselves to perceive the intruders; their sight being apparently not very clear in the open air, however penetrating in the water. I have thought it very remarkable that they will allow a vessel propelled by steam to pass much nearer than an ordinary boat, without removing; but this is equally the case with many other sea-birds. When fairly alarmed, they take to wing, launching in a curved line, and then flying low over the water, with a moderately quick, sedate, and even flight, usually in silence. Sometimes, however, they plunge headlong into the water, and emerge at a great distance. I have never seen them alight on land anywhere but on rock, and there, besides being restrained by the nature of the place, their motions are awkward, they not being at all fitted for walking. On the sea they alight heavily, and sit deep in the water, having the faculty, when apprehensive of danger, of sinking still deeper, so as to leave little exposed to view. They swim with surprising speed, often immerse their bill, and even the whole head as they proceed, and dive with extreme agility, with a sudden dart, and without opening their wings until they are under the surface, but then using them, as well as their feet, to propel themselves. In rising from the water into the air, they advance several yards, flapping the sea with their wings and feet, before they obtain a free course. Their food consists of small fishes, up to the size of a herring. On seizing their prey, they come to the surface, toss their head until the fish assumes a proper position, and swallow it head foremost; or occasionally toss it up in the air, and seize it again with open throat. Should it be too large to be swallowed, they beat and tear it with their bill, sometimes returning on shore for the purpose.

The Shag, as the Crested, or Green Cormorant, is very often called, may be at once distinguished from the species

just described, by its smaller size and uniformity of colour, which is mostly of a rich dark green, here and there shaded with black, or clouded with dusky grey. Yarrell says:—

In the localities visited, the habits of the Small or Grey Cormorant, as compared with those of the larger bird, present but few points of difference. The Shag, it is said, never quits the salt water to follow the course of a river, nor does it settle on trees like the Cormorant. They generally build low down on the rocks, nearer the water than the Cormorants, but in companies, like them; and Montagu says he has seen thirty nests close together on a small rock. The nest is formed of seaweed; the eggs, three or four in number, in shape and colour like those of its generic companion. These birds live on fish, in pursuit of which they exhibit all the skill of the Cormorant, and have a similar serrated claw; but as neither of them are observed to attempt to catch or to hold fish with their feet, it would seem that this is not to enable them to catch slippery prey. It would rather appear that the pectinated claw was used to dress and arrange the plumage.

The cry of the Cormorant is a low hoarse croak, seldom heard. It is said sometimes to emit a shrill scream, which portends stormy weather; so Horne, in his play of 'Gregory VII.', says:—

The news outsped
The proof, as doth a screaming Cormorant
The coming storm.

Perhaps, however, this may have referred to the common habit of most birds which fly landward uttering their shrill cries of fear at the approach of a tempest.

And now we are among the poets, let us quote a passage or two from them, descriptive of the habits of this bird. Montgomery, in his 'Pelican Island,' describes how—

Through yielding water, as through limpid air,
The Cormorant, death's living arrow, flew;
Nor ever miss'd a stroke, or dealt a second,
So true the infallible destroyer's aim.

And we are told, by those who have watched the bird fishing, that it seldom makes a plunge in vain.

Although a harmless bird, very attentive to its young,

and readily becoming tame and attached to its keepers, yet it delights in gorging and gluttony, which gives it a somewhat dark and sinister character in the eyes of the poets. So Grahame, in his 'Birds of Scotland,' describes it as a sea-scavenger.

On distant waves, the raven of the sea,
The Cormorant, devours her carrion food.
Along the blood-stained coast of Senegal,
Prowling, she scents the cassia-perfumed breeze
Tainted with death, and, keener, forward flies:
The towering sails, that waft the house of woe,
Afar she views; upon the heavy hulk,
Deep logged with wretchedness, full fast she gains:
(Revolting sight! the flag of freedom waves
Above the stern-emblazoned words, that tell
The amount of crimes which Britain's boasted laws
Within the narrow wooden walls permit!)

And now she nighs the carnage-freighted keel,
Unscared by rattling fetters, or the shriek
Of mothers, o'er their ocean-buried babes.
Lured by the scent, unweariedly she flies,
And at the foamy dimples of the track,
Darts sportively, or perches on a corpse.



GANNET.

THE COMMON GANNET (*Sula bassana*), often called the Solan Goose, represents with us the Gannets (genus *Sula*), birds essentially organised like the Cormorants, yet

in many respects differing from them in outward appearance, in the proportions of their parts, and in their habits.

Species of this genus occur in both hemispheres. They fly at a moderate height, with a steady motion, and on discovering their prey in the water, plunge headlong after it; on emerging, rest a little, and then fly off to renew the search. They never swim about in searching for food, and are seldom to be seen resting on the water.

The species above-named is a large and strongly constructed bird, generally measuring about thirty-six inches in length. The plumage is mostly white; there is a light yellowish red tinge about the head and hind neck, and the larger quills are brownish black; the bill is bluish grey, and there are bare spaces about the eyes, of the same colour.

We abridge the following description of this species from Mr. Gould's valuable work on 'The Birds of Europe:—

The seas bordering the European shores are the natural *habitat* of the Solan Gannet (*Sula bassana*, Bris.), and nowhere is it more common during summer than on the rugged and precipitous coasts of Scotland, especially the Bass Rock, the isles of Ailsa, St. Kilda, &c., where they breed in vast multitudes: these situations, in fact, appear to be the principal nursery for this race. On the approach of autumn they leave their rocky breeding-places, and go further out to sea, the greater number passing considerably to the south, feeding on herrings, pilchards, and other fishes. The flight of the Gannet is extremely rapid, and capable of being long sustained; hence it traverses the wide surface of the ocean with comparative ease. It is seldom found in flocks out at sea, but mostly alone, dispersed apparently in search of food. On the approach of spring they return to their accustomed rendezvous, which is generally preserved from molestation and farmed by persons who make a profit of the feathers and the young birds. While sitting on their nest, which is composed of seaweed and other similar materials, they are so absorbed in the task of incubation, that they will sometimes permit themselves to be approached, and even handled, without quitting it. They lay but a single white egg, which in size is between those of a Cormorant and a common Goose. From the time it is hatched till it arrives at maturity, no bird undergoes a more marked change in the colour of its plumage. Mr. Selby was informed by two persons who rent the Bass Rock, that the Gannet is four years in attaining a permanent state of plumage, and until this period has elapsed it is not known to breed. The first year's plumage (as that of the foregoing

woodcut) is characterised by the head, neck, and all the upper surface being blackish grey, inclining to brown, each feather tipped with a triangular spot of white; the breast and under-surface white, each feather being edged with greyish black; the quills and tail greyish black, the shafts of the latter being white; the bill blackish grey tinged with brown; the irides pale brown; the legs and feet deep grey.

All the movements of the Gannet on land are very awkward; it hobbles and waddles when it tries to walk, stares at you with its goggle white eyes, opens its ugly black throat, and emits a torrent of cackling sounds. But how different is it when on wing or in the water! how buoyantly it floats on either element! how rapidly it plunges or dives in pursuit of its prey! sometimes too rapidly, it would appear from the following paragraph:—

The Gannets during their fishing rise high into the air, and sail aloft over the shoals of herrings and pilchards, much after the manner of Kites. When they observe the shoal crowded thick together, they close their wings to their sides, and precipitate themselves head foremost into the water, dropping almost like a stone. Their eye in this act is so correct that they never fail to rise with a fish in their mouths. To take these birds, the inhabitants of St. Kilda tie a herring to a board and set it afloat, so that by falling furiously upon it the bird may break its neck in the attempt. Some years ago, at Penzance, one of these birds saw some pilchards lying on a fir plank in a place for curing these fishes, and darted down with so much violence as to strike its bill quite through an inch and quarter plank, and to kill itself on the spot.

North of the British Islands the Gannet is found in the Baltic as high as Bothnia; on the west coast of Norway; at the Faroe Islands, and Iceland; while from the west of Labrador they are said to go as far as Carolina. Southward from England the Gannet is included among the birds of Madeira and South Africa. Except about its breeding places, captures of the bird are rare in this country. We had the pleasure of seeing a fine specimen in the window of Mr. Waters, bird-stuffer of Rochester, which was taken alive by some labourers on a farm at Higham, not far from the river Medway, in April 1861. It is now, we believe, in the possession of J. Hulkes, Esq.

The person who rents the Bass Rock from the proprietor,

pays sixty or seventy pounds per annum, and depends for his returns chiefly upon the Gannets which breed there, and the adventurous natives who are let down from the cliffs that hang over the sea, while, with little or no support, they collect the eggs of these and other aquatic birds in a basket tied round their waists. The feathers also of these birds are gathered from the rocks, and are a great source of revenue to these poor and industrious people.

The good Bishop of Down and Connor will here again furnish us with a poetical picture, than which nothing could be more apt and illustrative :—

Down rushing from his cloudy height,
 With stronger bill, and swifter flight,
 And heavier weight, and broader sweep
 Of pinion, plunges in the deep
 The snow-white Gannet.

* * * * *

And so the summer long they flock
 In clouds about the sea-girt rock,
 There on their single eggs to brood,
 To hatch their speckled young ; for food,
 From their steep watch-tower in the sky,
 Mark with keen glance the herring fry
 Beneath the mantling waves advance,
 With motion quick as that keen glance,
 Sheer on the passing prey below,
 With black-tipt wing outstretch'd, to throw
 Their weight abrupt, and through the air
 Aloft the frequent victim bear.

CHAPTER XXI.

PLUNGERS: PETRELS, &c.—THE CINEREOUS AND MANX SHEARWATERS — BULWER'S, LEACH'S, WILSON'S, AND THE COMMON STORM PETRELS.

WE have now reached the last of the three great divisions into which aquatic birds are divided. The *Mersatores*, or Plungers, which order, as far as our present review of British birds is concerned, is divided into three families, as we shall presently see.

Macgillivray has given such a vivid and truthful picture of the general habits of the birds of this order, that often as we have quoted from his delightful 'History,' we cannot refrain from placing this before our readers; the more especially as our notice of the individual members of the order must be extremely brief—a mere catalogue, in fact.

Among the numerous birds that seek their subsistence in or upon the waters, and are fitted for an aquatic life by having their toes connected by a thin and pliant induplicature of the skin, converting their feet into paddles, are many which, roaming abroad over the face of the ocean, or following the sinuosities of its shores, pick up their food from its surface, or by plunging or dipping into it, without pursuing their prey into its depths. They are of lighter construction than the other sea-birds, with more plumage in proportion to their bulk, and furnished with wings of large size, generally elongated and narrow, which enable them to perform a more varied and extended flight, and to accomplish with ease all the evolutions frequently necessary to them. Sitting lightly on the water, chiefly for repose, they swim with ease, but not with speed at all approaching to the diving-birds, and none of them are capable of sinking or propelling themselves into the water from its surface. Their food consists of fishes, crustacea, mollusca, and other animals, the larger feeding also in the manner of vultures on dead cetacea, land mam-

malia and birds. The order is of universal distribution on the seas, many also frequenting fresh water, and even the species extend to vast distances. Enlivening the monotony of the vast expanse, they occasionally cheer the mariner, and afford the wearied passenger to distant lands a little of that amusement which he longs for, but which the deep yields in profusion only to the naturalist, and not always even to him. Without them the coasts would often seem lifeless; and when busy crowds of them are in pursuit of shoals of fishes, or searching the estuaries, they give an animation to the scene which contrasts with the effect caused by their absence. Peculiarly erratic, they settle for a time only to rear their young, after which they disperse; yet some are to be seen at every season, in almost every climate—on the barren shores of Iceland, the picturesque coasts of Greece, the luxuriantly wooded bays of the Indian islands, amid the floating ice of Nootka Sound, and on the sunny bosom of the Pacific Ocean.

PETRELS, &c.

The first family of the mersatorial birds consists of the *Procellariæ*—Petrels and allied species. Some of these are of gigantic, others of diminutive sizes; they are all wanderers over the face of the ocean; the mariner meets them hundreds of miles away from any shore, seeking their subsistence among the varied substances floating there, or the fishes and other animals that come within reach, dipping and plunging into the water, but never diving in pursuit of prey; and he fancies that they must really breed and nestle, and for ever dwell on the ocean, on whose surface they appear to walk with far more ease and facility than he does on land. Light as the foam flakes, they skim along the emerald valleys and over the golden ridges of the sun-lighted billows; and when the driving mist and the black shadows cover the waters, and the rising gale, rushing through the rigging, with a shrill whistle proclaims the coming storm, these birds seem then most busy and joyous, uttering their wild cries, and spreading their white pinions, appearing and disappearing between the waves, like spirits of the deep.

THE NORTHERN FULMAR (*Fulmarus glacialis*); the Fulmar, Mallemoke.—The common Fulmar of the Northern Atlantic is a stout bird, not unlike a Gull in appearance, with a moderately full body, and rather large

head ; its general length is twenty inches. The head, neck, and lower parts are white ; back and wings pale greyish blue ; the longer quills and wing coverts dark brown. It is remarkable for a curiously formed bill, having several protuberances on it ; the curved point is yellow, the sides horny white, and the superior ridge, investing the nostrils, greyish white.

Arctic voyagers state that this Fulmar is extremely abundant in the icy seas, especially in Hudson's Bay, Davis's Straits, and Baffin's Bay. Various authors state that it occurs in Iceland, Faroe, Norway, and sometimes on the coasts of Holland and France. According to Audubon, it extends on the eastern side of America as far south as Long Island. In Britain it is seldom met with elsewhere than at its only breeding place, the Island of St. Kilda, and there it occurs in prodigious numbers, being by far the most important production of the island, and forming one of the principal means of support to the natives, who daily risk their lives in its pursuit. This bird builds upon the face of the highest precipices, wherever there are small grassy shelves, every spot on which, about a few inches in extent, is occupied by the nests, which are composed of herbage, seldom bulky, generally a mere excavation in the turf, lined with dried grass and withered tufts of the sea pink. There is but a single egg in each, of a pure white colour when clean. The body yields a great deal of fat and oil, which, besides supplying the lamps, is used as medicine, acting as a cathartic.

Captain Scoresby describes the Fulmar as the constant companion of the whale fisher. It joins the ship immediately on passing the Shetland Islands, and accompanies it through the trackless ocean to the highest accessible latitudes. It keeps an eager watch for everything thrown overboard ; the smallest particle of fatty substance can scarcely escape it. These birds are extremely greedy of the fat of the whale. Though few should be seen when a whale is about to be captured, yet as soon as the fleshing commences, they rush in from all quarters, and frequently accumulate to many thousands in number.

Bishop Mant has well described the various services rendered by the Fulmar to man :—

Yet may she coast more northern seas,
 Round Hebrid isles and Orcades,
 And Shetland onward, till more far
 Her course the icy mountains bar ;
 And there the kindred Fulmar seek,
 Her nostril broad, and crooked beak
 With yellow nail projecting ; whence,
 Instinctive weapon of defence,
 By Nature taught, against his foes
 A stream of liquid oil he throws
 At random, gathered from the sea,
 His floating food ; more plenteously,
 As tending on the harpooner's sail,
 He shares the plunder of the whale.
 How great is Nature's kindness, shown
 When needed most ! From him alone,
 Free burgher on her common way,
 Himself to man an easy prey,
 By day supplied a grateful feast,
 Their ailments cured, their wounds redrest,
 Their lamp illum'd with evening light,
 With down their couches strewn by night,
 Saint Kilda's simple natives find ;
 Nor less a signal of the wind,
 As by his flittings or repose
 Defined, the aërial current flows.

THE CINEREOUS SHEARWATER (*Puffinus cinereus*).

THE MANX SHEARWATER (*P. Anglorum*), sometimes called the Lyre, Lÿrie, Scrabe, Scraber.

These two birds represent in Britain the genus *Puffinus*, the members of which differ from the Fulmars in having the bill much more slender, with both points curved downwards. The first of them is about eighteen inches long ; the upper parts of the body are brown ; the head and nape tinged with grey ; the long quills and graduated tail feathers are blackish brown, the under parts white. But few individuals of the first species have been obtained in England. There is some confusion in the descriptions given by naturalists of this bird, which may or may not be identical with one described as the Greater Shearwater—the *Puffinus major* of Faber, or the Wandering Shearwater

of Audubon and Nuttall, which is said to breed on the banks of Newfoundland. The second named of the above is a smaller bird, whose general length is about fifteen inches: the upper parts are deep greyish black, the lower white, the sides and neck being indistinctly barred with these colours.

Mr. Gould describes this bird as so exclusively aquatic, that the impulse of incubation alone induces it to visit land; on which occasions it resorts to those portions only of the shore which are washed by the surge, generally selecting such places as small islands, which, from the danger of approach, or from their rocky nature, are seldom made the residence of man. Both the eggs and young of the bird are eagerly sought after as an article of food, the latter especially being considered a great delicacy. On the eastern part of the southern line of the English coast, the Shearwater is a rare bird; it is more frequently seen at sea, off Dorset and Devon. Off the coast of Cornwall, to the westward of St. Agnes, in the Scilly group, lies a barren island, called Annet, which is a favourite resort and breeding place of these birds. Each female lays a single white egg, and deposits it in a rabbit burrow, or a crevice in the rock, sometimes in the sandy soil, without any preparation, but generally there is a slight accumulation of fern leaves and old stems.

The Manx Shearwater is found on the coast of Norway, the Faroe Islands, and at Cape Farewell, where the sailors call them Cape Hens. Faber includes it among the birds of Iceland. In America it is rarely seen to the west of Newfoundland.

BULWER'S STORM PETREL (*Thalassidroma Bulwerii*).

LEACH'S STORM PETREL (*T. Leachii*). Also known as the Fork-tailed Petrel.

WILSON'S STORM PETREL (*T. Wilsonii*).

THE COMMON STORM PETREL (*T. Pelagica*), variously called Mother Cary's Chicken, Storm Finch, Little Petrel, Water Witch, Alamonti, Asilag, Mitty, Spency, Sea Swallow.

The scientific name, *Thalassidroma*, given to the genus of birds here represented, signifies sea-runners, and is

applied to them because, in searching for food, they fly close to the surface, and while hovering or stooping, let down their feet, and pat the water with them; so they seem, as it were, to run on the waves. The common name, Petrel, or Little Peter, given to the whole of this family, has reference to the Apostle Peter's walking upon the water.

The Storm Petrels are the smallest of those birds which, being furnished with a membrane between the toes, are peculiarly adapted for swimming. Diminutive as they are, and therefore, as one might naturally think, less able than the larger species to withstand the violence of the winds and waves, they are those which venture farthest from land, being often met with in the very middle of the Atlantic Ocean.



STORM PETREL.

The predominating colours of the Storm Petrels are greyish black and sooty brown. Three of the species above named have a patch of white, more or less distinct, about the base of the tail; the sexes are similarly coloured, and the young differ only in having the tints lighter. Macgillivray says of these birds, that :—

They are in a great measure nocturnal, being most active in the dusk summer nights, and in gloomy weather. During winter and spring they roam over the seas, and in the beginning of summer

collect in bands, which resort to particular breeding-places, on headlands or unfrequented islands. They nestle in the crevices of rocks, in holes in the turf, or under stones on the beaches. The female lays a single large, elliptical, white egg. The young remain in the nest until able to fly. The sitting birds are easily caught on their nests, as they seldom attempt to fly off. On being seized, they, like the Fulmars, discharge the contents of their stomachs, generally consisting of oil. They feed on oily and fatty substances, small crustacea, and mollusca, which they pick up as they skim over the waters. They float lightly like Gulls, but are incapable of diving. Their flight is buoyant and rapid, somewhat resembling that of swallows. The species, which are not numerous, are distinguished chiefly by their relative size, and the form of the tail. One, *Thalassidroma pelagica*, is common in the British Seas, and breeds in our northern islands; another, *Thalassidroma Leachii*, although uncommon, breeds in St. Kilda. Some individuals only of other two species have been met with in Britain.

These birds are confounded by navigators under the general name of Mother Cary's chicken, so that the limits of the distribution of the species are not well known. They are held in abhorrence by sailors, being supposed to prognosticate stormy weather, especially when they fly around or in the wake of the ship. The circumstances under which they approach vessels have not, however, been correctly described. Some say they come up before a gale for shelter, being able by their rapid flight to outstrip it; while others allege that, in rough or calm weather, before a gale or before a calm alike, they make their appearance, and that their object is simply to pick up the objects of food raised by the agitation of the water, or such as are thrown overboard.

Where mountain billows roll and loud winds sing,
The stormy Petrel, on untiring wing,
Still skims along the ocean's troubled breast,
And safely steers above each foaming crest;
As the prophetic herald glances by,
The anxious sailor knows that danger's nigh.

So sings Mrs. Meredith, known, before she left her native lakes and romantic glens of Wales for the settler's home in Tasmania, as Miss Twamley; and James Montgomery, in his Pelican Island, tells us how—

Here run the stormy Petrels on the waves,
As though they were the shadows of themselves,
Reflected from a loftier flight through space.

Several poets have described this bird ; but Barry Cornwall's spirited lyric is the finest and most descriptive poem on the Petrel with which we are acquainted : —

A thousand miles from land are we
Tossing about on the roaring sea,
From billow to bounding billow cast,
Like fleecy snow on the stormy blast ;
The sails are scattered about like weeds,
The strong masts shake like quivering reeds,
The mighty cables and iron chains,
The hull, which all earthly strength disdains,
They strain and they crack, and hearts like stone,
Their natural hard proud strength disown.

Up and down ! up and down !
From the base of the wave to the billow's crown,
And amidst the flashing and feathery foam
The stormy Petrel finds a home ;
A home, if such a place there be
For her who lives on the wide, wide sea,
On the craggy ice, in the frozen air,
And only seeking her rocky lair
To warm her young, and teach them to spring
At once o'er the waves on their stormy wing !

O'er the deep ! o'er the deep !
Where the whale, and the shark, and the sword-fish sleep,
Outflying the blast and the driving rain,
The Petrel telleth her tale in vain,
For the mariner curseth the warning bird
Who bringeth him news of the storms unheard.
Ah ! thus does the prophet of good or ill
Meet hate from the creatures he serveth still,
Yet he never falters. So, Petrel, spring
Once more o'er the waves on thy stormy wing.

CHAPTER XXII.

GULLS :— THE GREAT AND LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS — THE HERRING, GLAUCUS, WHITE-WINGED, AND GREEN-BILLED GULLS — THE COMMON, POMARINE, RICHARDSON'S, AND PARASITIC SKUAS — THE WHALE GULL — THE KITTIWAKE — THE LEADEN-GREY AND BROWN-HOODED MEWS — THE BROWN-MASKED, SABINE'S, BONAPARTE'S, AND THE LITTLE MEWS — THE ROSY GULL.

IN the *Larinæ*, or Gull family, we have a number of birds which present many of the same characteristics as do the Petrels and Terns; indeed, by some authors they are included with them in one family group. In Macgillivray's synopsis of the British members of the *Larinæ*, we find six genera, and nineteen species, of whose general habits this account is given :—

These birds inhabit the shores of the ocean, along which they wander in search of food, the larger species preying on fishes, crustacea, mollusca, and occasionally feeding on the carcasses of cetacea, seals, and other marine mammalia, while the smaller feed chiefly on fishes, articulated and molluscou animals. They all pursue shoals of fishes in the open sea, often to great distances from the shore, and many of them make occasional excursions over the land, especially in stormy weather. They walk with considerable ease, wade in shallow pools, or by the shore, swim moderately well, and sit very lightly on the water, but are incapable of diving. Their flight is buoyant, in general moderately rapid, easy, gliding, and protracted. Hovering over the water, they sometimes plunge headlong upon their prey, but more frequently seize it only when it is near enough to the surface to render it unnecessary to immerse more than the bill and the head. When thus looking for food, they sustain themselves by a quivering movement of their upstretched wings, and occasionally by patting the water with their feet. They generally congregate, often in vast numbers, in particular places, as headlands, cliffs, rocky islands, some of them in marshes, or upon islets in lakes, for the purpose of breeding. Their nests are bulky, or rudely constructed,

and they lay from two to four, seldom five, large oval eggs, of an olivaceous or greyish colour, patched or spotted with dusky. The young, at first clothed with close variegated down, very soon walk, and readily take to the water; but if not disturbed, generally remain about the nest until they are able to fly.

THE GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL (*Larus marinus*), sometimes called the Cobb, or Carrion Gull.

THE LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL (*L. fuscus*), also known as the Yellow-footed Gull.

THE HERRING GULL (*L. argentatus*), sometimes called the Silvery Gull.

THE GLAUCUS GULL (*L. glaucus*), otherwise the Burgomaster, or Iceland Gull.

THE WHITE-WINGED GULL (*L. leucopterus*), also called the Lesser Iceland Gull.

THE GREEN-BILLED GULL (*L. canus*), also known as the Common Gull, Sea Maw, Mew, or Mall.

We here have the British members of the genus *Larus*, the Gulls properly so called, which are birds of large or moderate size, with full bodies, moderately long and thick necks, and large heads, broadly ovate, and narrowed behind.



GREAT GULL.

First on the list we have the Cobb, the largest, and perhaps the most beautiful, of a tribe of birds, remarkably alike

for their symmetry of form, grace of motion, and delicacy and harmony of colour. We must here quote Macgillivray again, as we can find no author who describes, so well as he does, the lovely Gulls and other waterfowl that enliven our seas, and shores, and wild marshy districts, which, without them, were so lonely, sad, and desolate:—

The contrast between the dark purple tint of his back and wings, and the snowy white of the rest of his plumage, with the bright carmine-patched yellow of his powerful bill, and the delicate pinkish hue of his feet, render him an object at all times agreeable to the sight. No sprinkling of dust, no spot of mud ever soil his downy clothing; his bill exhibits no tinge derived from the subject of his last meal, bloody or half putrid though it be; and his feet, laved by the clear brine, are beautifully pure. There he stands on the sandy point, the guardian, as it were, of that flock of not less cleanly, and scarcely less lovely, Herring Gulls and Sea Mews. But, not giving us more credit for our good intentions than we deserve, he spreads out his large wings, stretches forth his long neck, runs a few paces, and, uttering a loud screaming cry, springs into the air. Some gentle flaps of those vigorous wings carry him to a safe distance, when he alights on the smooth water, and is presently joined by his clamorous companions. Buoyantly they float, each with his head to the wind, like a fleet of merchantmen at anchor, secured from the attacks of pirates by the presence of their gallant convoy. If, in mere wantonness, you discharge your artillery, sending a bullet skipping among the flock, they hurriedly rise on wing, fill the air with their cries, and wheel around at a safe distance; while the Black-backed Gull, disdaining to mingle with the clamorous crowd, after a few wide circlings, flies off seaward, and is soon out of sight.

The author above quoted calls this bird the Marine Vulture, and says, that on the coasts of England there are few places where it considers it safe to breed; nor are there many in the south of Scotland; but on the islets and rocks of the Hebrides, Shetland, and Orkney Islands, vast numbers annually nestle, although not many are often met with in the same spot. We can, however, tell the northern naturalist, that on the flat shores of Kent and Essex, and the marshes about the estuary of the Thames, this bird remains all the year, and occasionally nestles. It is more generally called the Cobb, as it was nearly three hundred years ago, when Dr. Turner wrote his 'British Ornithology.'

Thompson describes this noble bird as a resident in Ireland; Montagu has seen it in considerable numbers in

Wales. It breeds on Lundy Island, in the British Channel, and has been shot as high up the Severn as Worcester. It has been found in Cornwall and Devonshire, Suffolk and Norfolk, Durham and Northumberland, and indeed in most of the maritime English counties. It inhabits North America, is included among the birds of Greenland, and has been seen as far north as Baffin's Bay; Sweden, Norway, Germany, Holland, France, and Italy, and the shores of the Caspian Sea are its European habitats.

The Lesser Black-backed Gull, at a distance, can scarcely be distinguished from its larger congener, which it resembles in its habits. It is generally dispersed along the British coasts, and is a permanent resident. It is a peculiarly elegant and graceful bird, measuring about twenty-two inches in length. The back and wings are blackish grey, tinged with purple or dark slate colour; the quills tipped with white, which is the colour of the rest of the body, only that the head and hind neck have light brown streaks; the bill is light orange, with a vermilion patch on the lower mandible; the margins of the eye-lids are also bright red.

In some districts this bird is of rare occurrence, in others plentiful; and it is more so in the northern than in the southern parts of the country, probably because in the former it obtains more secure breeding places. The spots chosen are unfrequented islands, headlands, and sometimes inland lakes; to these they betake themselves in May, and remain there until the young are able to fly. Their nests, composed of withered grass and other herbage, are placed in hollows formed in the turf, or in superficial chinks of the rocks.

The Herring Gull is generally about twenty-three inches in length; it has flesh-coloured feet, a yellow bill, and margins to the eyelids, with an orange patch on the lower mandible; the back and wings are light bluish gray, slightly tinged with purple; the quills variegated with black and white; the head and neck and other parts pure white. A truly beautiful bird, with soft, full, close, and elastic plumage; the wings are long, extending an inch and a half beyond the short rounded tail. Why this species in par-

ticular should be called the Herring Gull we cannot guess. All Gulls are fond of herrings, and this not more so than the rest, although it follows the shoals very assiduously, assembling in vast numbers along our coasts, chiefly in the inlets and estuaries, when the young fish are congregated in them.



HERRING GULL.

In May they resort to their breeding places along the coasts, which are much the same as those chosen by the species last described. Their nests are often bulky, formed of grass and herbaceous plants of various kinds, according to the locality. Their eggs vary greatly in general colour and markings, two of them seldom being alike.

The Glaucus Gull is one of the largest and most powerful members of its family, the Burgomaster or chief magistrate of the sea. It is an inhabitant of the most northern regions of the globe, breeding in the arctic parts of America, from Labrador northwards to Iceland, and advancing southward in winter, although to no great extent. A bold, rapacious bird, notoriously greedy and voracious, preying not only on fish and small birds, but on carrion of every kind. Unlike most of its congeners, this is a silent, shy, and sluggish bird, unless when driven by hunger to activity, when it becomes energetic and fearless as any, if

not quite so clamorous as some. The general length of this bird is twenty-six or twenty-seven inches; the back and wings are light bluish grey, the quills being white at the end; the head and neck are white, streaked with very pale brown; all the other parts of the plumage are white. The feet are flesh-coloured; the bill is a brown yellow, with a carmine patch on the lower mandible; the edges of the eyelids are red. The bird is called *Glaucus* from its shining, frosted, or silvery appearance; it is sometimes called the Large White-winged Gull. It has never been known to breed in the British Islands.

The White-winged Gull is another rare visitant to these islands, where but few specimens have been taken, mostly in Scotland, and none farther south than Yorkshire. It is found in summer on the coasts of Greenland, Labrador, and other arctic regions, whence it migrates southward in autumn, advancing as far as Boston along the eastern shores of America; while in Europe it appears along the continental shores as far southward as Holland and Belgium.

The colours of the plumage of this bird are much like those of the species last described, than which it is much smaller. Yarrell gives this condensed account of its habits, as described by Faber:—‘Its manners differ from those of the *Glaucus* Gull, which has the habits of the Great Black-backed Gull, and moves with more energy. The nature of the White-winged Gull more resembles that of the Herring Gull; its deportment and flight are more graceful, it hovers over its prey, is somewhat greedy, always active, and is not afraid to fight with equal or superior antagonists for its food.’

The Common Gull is the smallest British member of its genus, its general length being about eighteen inches; the back and wings are light bluish grey, the quills tipped with white, the outer five variegated with black; all the rest of the plumage is white, that on the head and hind neck being streaked and spotted with brownish grey; the bill is greenish yellow, margins of the eyelids red, feet greenish grey.

A common, lively, and beautiful species this, the familiar representative of the true British Gulls, well known upon all our coasts and in the estuaries of our tidal rivers, as

well as far inland, where, when the fields have been cleared of their produce, and ploughed to prepare them for another crop, the Sea Maws or Sea Mews, as they are often called, appear in large flocks, looking, at a distance, like flecks of sea foam cast upon the surface of the brown mould, busily engaged picking up the worms and larvæ that have been exposed; sometimes in company with a troop of rooks, whose sable plumage offers a strong contrast to the delicate tints of the Gulls.

When the country becomes covered with snow, they retreat to the shores, and return again when the thaws have partially exposed their feeding ground. During the winter, they almost entirely desert the northern sterile parts of Scotland, and advance southward; but their favourite breeding places are the islands and along the coasts of that country, and thither, when spring advances, they betake themselves, and may there be found congregated in vast numbers, in company with other members of their family, and many other sea birds. Macgillivray says that the lower parts of the craggy cliffs, rocky peninsulas, and small unfrequented islands are their favourite stations. I have often, however, found their nests in the turf along with those of the Herring Gulls. They are composed generally of fuci, occasionally of grass, bits of turf, and other vegetable substances. The eggs, generally three, sometimes two, are of a broadly ovate form, white, or yellowish brown, of greyish green, sometimes approaching to white, dotted and spotted with dark brown or purplish grey.

Macgillivray describes this species as having

A light buoyant flight, during which it often inclines to either side. It walks and runs prettily with short steps, pats the sands at the edge of the water with its feet, emits a shrill, somewhat harsh cry, and is apt to give the alarm to other birds at the approach of the sportsman. It is not, however, nearly so timid, or at least so sensible of danger, as the larger Gulls, and either in the fields, or on the seashore, often allows a person to come within shot. Often, also, when one has been killed or wounded, its companions, after flying off, collect again, hover around, or even alight, when some of them may often be obtained. When feeding along with rooks, in pasture ground, they are often found to be less wary than these birds, especially in places where they are not much liable to be molested.

They never, I think, molest any other bird, nor are they at all addicted to quarrelling among themselves. Their food consists of small fishes, such as sand-eels and young herrings, which they pick up from the water, first hovering, with extended and elevated wings, then descending, spreading their tail, and letting down their feet, with which I have often seen them pat the water as if they were running on land. They never plunge so as to be immersed, but merely seize on what comes close to the surface. They also feed upon stranded fishes of large size, asteriæ, mollusca, shrimps, and other small crustacea. Sometimes also they pick up grain in the fields, and in a state of domestication may be partly fed on bread. They are easily tamed; but unless in a garden, or where they are not liable to be teased, they are seldom found to live long in this condition.

THE COMMON SKUA (*Lestris Catarractes*), sometimes called the Skua Gull, or Bonxie.

THE POMARINE SKUA (*L. Pomarinus*).

RICHARDSON'S SKUA (*L. Richardsonii*), variously called the Arctic Gull, Man-of-War Bird, Boatswain, Teaser, Dung Bird, or Dung Hunter, Dirlen or Scoute Allen, Scull, Badock, Fasgadir.

THE PARASITIC SKUA (*L. Parasitica*).—In the Skuas, or Skua Gulls, we have a group of birds nearly allied to the Petrels, and more intimately to the true Gulls, from which they are distinguished by their bolder aspect and habits, which might almost entitle them to be called Sea Falcons. They are generally considered as forming a single genus, to which some give the name *Catarractes*, and others *Lestris*; the latter term signifying a robber, expressive of the predatory habits of the birds, which are especially remarkable for their practice of pursuing Gulls and Terns, and causing them to disgorge a portion of their food, on which the plunderers feed as it falls from them. It is doubtful if they ever fish for themselves; but it seems that they feed upon the carcasses of whales and dead animals which float upon the waters. They have a more bounding and rapid flight than the Gulls, and the curvature of their claws seems to be intended for prehension, although they do not seize upon the birds which they pursue.

All the Skuas are compact and robust of form; they have moderately long necks and large heads, than which the bills

are somewhat shorter, about as broad as high at the base, flattened towards the end, straight, with the tips decurved.

The first of the above named is, except the last (which is a rare bird with us), the largest as well as the commonest of the British species, measuring about twenty-four inches in length. The general colour of the upper part of this species is dark greyish brown, streaked with brownish yellow; the larger quills are brownish black, having their shafts and basal parts white, forming a conspicuous patch of that colour on each wing; the tail is brownish black.



COMMON SKUA.

This bird, like its congeners, is said to utter a sharp shrill cry, which resembles the word *Skua*, or *Skui*, hence the common name applied to the genus. It is seldom met with on the coasts of England or Ireland, or even on those of the south of Scotland; it does not occur in the Hebrides, and but rarely even in the Orkneys. In the Shetland Isles it was formerly not unfrequent, although even there it had few breeding-places. Mr. Dunn, who visited these islands in 1831 and 1833, shot a considerable number, although he says several parties from the south, and the officers of a cutter stationed in Rona's Voe for two or three months, had almost extirpated them in that part. He says that he once saw a pair of these birds beat off a large eagle from their breeding-place on Rona's Hill. The Rev. Mr.

Low, too, who gives an account of the Skuas on the Island of Foula, one of the Shetland group, describes the fury with which the birds attacked dogs and men who came near their quarters. He says:—‘When the inhabitants are looking after their sheep upon the hills, the Skua often attacks them in such a manner that they are obliged to defend themselves with their cudgels, held above their heads, on which it often kills itself.’

The Pomarine Skua has the plumage of the upper parts blackish brown, that of the lower parts white. It is inferior in size to the common species, seldom measuring over twenty-two inches, and of a less robust make. It inhabits the Arctic seas, extending as far southward as Nova Scotia, and along the coasts of Europe beyond the British Channel. It does not appear to be a permanent resident in Britain, or to have been found breeding here; but considerable numbers must frequent our coasts in autumn, winter, and spring, as many are recorded to have been seen, and not a few killed, in various parts of Scotland and England.

Richardson's Skua, a bird with many names, is much better known. It generally measures about twenty-one inches in length; the male in summer has the upper part of the head, like the upper parts of the body, blackish brown; the nape and upper sides of the neck yellowish white; the shafts of the longer quills, like the back part of the forehead, the cheeks, throat, and lower parts of the body, are white; the fore neck is tinged with brown. It may at once be distinguished from the common Skua by the comparative shortness of the two middle pointed tail feathers.

Macgillivray, after giving a beautifully vivid description of the mode of flight and attack of this bold sea robber, which, he says, is the terror of the lesser Gulls and Terns, goes on to state that ‘these birds are rather numerous in autumn along the shores of the Firths of Forth and Tay. Along our eastern shores they are met with here and there. In the Firths of Beaulieu and Cromarty, they are at least as frequent as in those of the south of Scotland. On the Solway and in the Clyde

they are also seen. But in winter they are all gone; and in summer the places in which they are to be met with are the Orkney and Shetland Islands on one side, the outer Hebrides and some of the inner on the other. During the whole of the warm season they are there not uncommon, and are as often seen in the sounds and the channels, as along the sandy shore. But the places in which they are to be met with in the greatest abundance are on the heaths at a distance from the sea, to which, however, they still resort, as three or four miles is to them less than three or four hundred paces to us, or at least to many people.'

One might naturally suppose that this rover of the seas would breed on its shores, on cliffs, or unfrequented islands, but this does not appear to be the case, as the bird constructs its nest on low, wet, mossy heaths, in exposed situations—at least such as have been observed to breed in the Scottish isles do so. The female generally lays two eggs, and has recourse to the same stratagem that the Plover employs to decoy intruders from her nest, which is often placed on lumps of peat, covered with heather, that emerge from a pool or bog. When a person or dog approaches near to the places where the nest is built, the bird becomes bold and fierce, and strikes severely with the feet and bill. The eggs differ greatly in form, size, and colour; the largest in Macgillivray's collection measured two inches and four and a half twelfths in length. The ground colour is brownish green or olivaceous, or greyish brown of any intermediate shade; they are spotted, and patched with dark and light brown, and purplish grey.

Some naturalists have given the name *Stercoraceous* to this species, under the impression that it feeds on the dung of the Gulls and Terns which it pursues. But this is an error. That the same opinion prevails to some extent among the illiterate we may presume, from the popular names, Dung-bird and Dirlen-Allen.

Of the Parasitic Skua we need say but little; it is somewhat larger than the species last described, but has not so bulky a body; it is very similar to it in the colour of its plumage, and has, until within a recent period, been confounded with it. Very few individuals have been obtained

in Britain. The arctic regions generally, the coasts of Norway, the east coast of North America as far south as the Gulf of Mexico, are its chief habitats. Macgillivray says that he has not met with it alive, or if he has, did not distinguish it from the other species. Very little is known of its habits, which are said to resemble those of Richardson's Skua, or Jager, as it is sometimes called.

It is most likely the common Skua that Mant describes in these animated lines:—

'Twere harder task for him to bear,
 Whoe'er thy nesting place should dare
 To storm, and war with thine or thee,
 Brown Skua, Eagle of the sea,
 Thou island king! Who now art fain
 At large to haunt the wintry main;
 At large, thy summer sojourn past,
 To dally with the stormy blast,
 And sport thee on the boundless tide,
 Nor longer in thy port abide,
 'Mid Shetland's northern waves, that break
 Round craggy Foulah's lonely peak.
 Bird of the sea, and sea-girt throne!
 Who on thy cere-clad bill alone
 The plundering falcon's ensign wear'st,
 Alone of ocean's wanderers tear'st
 The prey, with hooked claws acute,
 Projected from the palmate foot;
 Strong through the billowy deep to swim,
 More strong to scud o'er ocean's brim,
 Or forage in the ærial height:
 Scared, intercepted in his flight,
 Through fear of thee the ravening gull
 Disgorges from his gullet, full
 Of fresh-caught fish, the finny prey,
 Caught in its rapid seaward way;
 The finny prey is doom'd to fill
 Thy mightier gorge and stronger bill:
 Nor dares the eagle's self to meet
 Thy prowess, when thy island seat
 Thou hold'st the Boreal waves among,
 Guard of thy nest, and cherish'd young:
 Nor safe is venturous man to brave
 Thy fastness in the mountain cave,
 And of its treasur'd brood despoil;
 Lest, 'mid his ineffectual toil,

Descending sheer thy piercing beak
 On his cleft head unshelter'd wreak
 Keen vengeance, and the rocky shore
 Strew with his brains and streaming gore:
 Then only rescued, if the advance
 Of sharpen'd pole, of steel-capt lance,
 Meet in full tilt thy furious course;
 And by thine own impetuous force
 Home through thy bronze-like corslet driven,
 Of plaited plumage rent and riven,
 Prevent the death-denouncing blow,
 And leave unscath'd the victor foe.

THE IVORY WHALE WHITE GULL (*Cetosparactes eburneus*), sometimes called the Ivory or White Gull, Senator, Snow-Bird, from the peculiarly white colour of its plumage.

This bird is the sole representative of a genus called *Cetosparactes*, meaning Whale-tearer, suggested by the well known habit which it has of attending on the whale ships, and greedily devouring blubber and other animal matter. This species appears to be in no way distinguishable from some others of its family, unless by its purely white plumage, and comparatively stout bill; there are some other marks of distinction which are obvious only to the scientific naturalist.

The Ivory Gull measures about twenty inches in length; it has black feet and a greenish grey bill, tinged with reddish yellow beyond the nostrils. It inhabits the arctic regions of both continents, and in particular the coasts of Spitzbergen and Greenland, on the cliffs of which it breeds. According to Captain Sabine, it is abundant in Baffin's Bay, and Dr. Richardson states, that it was found breeding in great numbers on the high perforated cliffs forming the extremity of Cape Parry, in latitude 70°. Very few instances of its visiting Britain have been recorded.

THE BLACK-FOOTED KITTIWAKE (*Rissa tridactyla*), sometimes called the Annet, or Tarrock.

This is another single representative of a genus called *Rissa*, the chief distinctive characteristic of which appears to be the extremely diminutive size of the hind toe, the form of the bill, and shortness of the beak. In most of

its habits it closely resembles the Ivory Gull, than which it is somewhat smaller, its maximum length being about seventeen inches. The hind part of the neck, with the occiput, the back and wings, are pale bluish grey ; the larger quill feathers are black, and the rest of the plumage pure white ; the feet are black, and the bill pale greenish yellow. Birds of the first year have dark markings on the neck and wings, and in this state the name Tarrock has been applied to them ; until recently the impression has been entertained that they were a different species.



KITTIWAKE.

The Kittiwakes arrive along our coasts at the end of March, and disappear in October. Some assert that these birds remain with us during the winter on the open seas, if not in the bays and estuaries ; but Macgillivray finds no evidence to support this doctrine, although individuals are met with at that season in the estuaries of Scotland, and along the southern coasts of England. They betake themselves to high maritime cliffs, selecting those most inaccessible, and generally such as are frequented by Auks, Guillemots, and other sea birds. To these favourite resorts they return year after year, and it does not seem that they ever occupy other stations, or form new colonies.

In summer this species is dispersed over the arctic regions of both continents, and in winter advances southward ; how

far it travels along the European coasts has not, we believe, been determined. Audubon states that during the autumnal and winter months it occurs along the whole of the extreme coasts of the United States.

With us it builds high up on the ledges of rocky cliffs, making its nest of sea weeds; there are generally three eggs in each nest; they are about two inches and a half long, of a stone colour tinged with white, and thickly spotted with grey and brown.

THE LEADEN-GREY HOODED MEW (*Gavia atricilla*), known also as the Laughing or Black-headed Gull.

THE BROWN HOODED MEW (*G. rudibunda*), variously called the Black-cap, Black-headed, Laughing Peewit, or Red-legged Gull; the Hooded Maw, Mire Crow, Pickmire or Pictarn.

THE BROWN MASKED MEW (*G. capistrata*), sometimes called the Masked Gull.

SABINE'S MEW (*G. Sabini*), called also Sabine's or the Fork-tailed Gull.

BONAPARTE'S MEW (*G. Bonapartii*), called also the Bonapartian Gull.

THE LITTLE MEW (*G. minutus*), known also as the Little Gull.

Another generic group of the great Gull family is here represented. There seems to be no end of these Gulls; the cry is 'still they come,' surging up from the north, myriads upon myriads, like billows of the seas on which they float and feed, as Gisborne says:—

In light wing'd squadrons, Gulls of every name
Screaming discordant o'er the surface hang,
And ceaseless stoop for prey.

The Sea Mews, or Smaller Gulls (genus *Gavia*), differ from the true Gulls in being inferior in size, of a more slender form, and especially in having the bill and feet comparatively feeble. Their cries are loud, shrill, and sometimes resembling laughter, hence one of the species is called the Laughing Gull. Much more active than the

members of the genus *Larus*, they perform their aerial evolutions with great celerity. Specimens are found on all our maritime coasts, and the habits of all are to a great extent similar, and so closely resemble those of the other members of their family, that we need not here describe them. With some authors, Yarrell among the number, we do not find them placed in a separate genus, but in company with most of the other Gulls under the common generic head of *Larus*, which in the arrangement of Linnæus comprehended all the birds which are here given as belonging to the order *Mersatores*, or Plungers.

The Laughing Gull, as the first named in the above list of Sea Mews is commonly called, is about eighteen inches in length. The head and part of the neck are of a blackish leaden grey colour, the lower parts white, with a slight roseate tinge; the back and wings are light bluish grey; the longer quills are black; there is a black crescent before the eye, and a grey patch behind it; the bill and feet are a rich carmine. The wings of this bird extend three inches beyond the tail, and this, with its slender make, gives the impression of great lightness and power of flight. It is an American species, and was first described as a visitor to the British shores by Montagu, in his 'Ornithological Dictionary,' where it is stated, that in the month of August 1776, five of them were seen feeding together on a pool upon the shingly flats near Winchelsea. One was shot; but although the other four remained about the spot for a considerable time, they were too shy to be procured. It does not appear that any other specimen than that which is preserved in the British Museum was ever obtained in the country.

Catesby, in his 'Natural History of Carolina,' calls this the Laughing Gull, and Audubon, who gives a very extended account of this bird, says, that in the breeding season, when they assemble by hundreds of pairs, or even by thousands, they are so clamorous as to stun your ears with their laughing-like cries, though at other times they are generally silent, unless when suddenly alarmed, or when chased by the jager. It was probably not to this bird, but to a more familiar species, whose shrill scream Miss

Twamley alludes to in these lines. Most of the Gulls utter a cry which at times more or less resembles a burst of shrill laughter :—

Hark! was not that a shrilly echoing cry?
No;—'twas the Sea-gull fleetly wheeling by,
Roused by the storm that chafes along the deep,
E'en from his lofty eyrie on the steep,
And to the loud blast pealing o'er the tide,
Her wild shrill scream, or demon laugh replied
As if in triumph.

To this we may add Bishop Mant's spirited lines:—

But see, for not from viewless height,
But, wheeling low with swooping flight,
Flaps his long wings, the loud Sea Mew;
His back and sides of sober hue,
And wings of fleecy brightness gleam,
Slow waving in the sunny beam:
Of all the tribes of ocean none
Less prompt the haunts of men to shun;
None more alert in frequent flocks,
At winter's call, their cavern'd rocks
To quit, and from the sea-wash'd shore
Fly inland; there to hover o'er
Freshet, or stream, or running brook,
The trout's lov'd haunt; or with the rook
The new-turn'd furrows' banquet share,
Nor for their native billows care.

The Black-headed Gull, as Yarrell and others call the second-named of the above species, is very like the Laughing Gull of America just described, to which the term Black-headed is also sometimes applied. It is somewhat smaller than that species, seldom exceeding sixteen inches in length. The head and throat of this bird are deep brown, becoming nearly black behind; the lower parts are white, slightly tinged with rose colour; the back and wings are bluish grey; the quill feathers are black and white, as in the last species. There is the same crescent before the eye, and grey patch behind it; and the legs and bill are of the same rich red colour. Where then is the difference? Why, in the smaller size, the shorter bill and feet, and 'mask,' as the deep shade over the head and breast is

sometimes called, being deep brown instead of leaden blue. This is a common species with us; it is generally distributed throughout the country, and is permanently resident, breeding in much the same places as the Common Gulls, and, like them, often going inland to feed on the worms and larva turned up by the plough. When shoals of young herrings, or other fish, appear on the coast, they congregate in vast numbers, along with Gulls of various species; and continue to feed upon them as long as they remain. A remarkable scene of this kind, which occurred in the Frith of Forth in the winter of 1839, is described by Macgillivray.

The Masked Gull is Yarrell's name for the next species, which is very rare with us. The dark shade does not extend over the whole of the bird, but simply from the occiput downward to the throat, leaving the back of the head, like the throat, breast, and under parts, pure white. The term 'masked,' therefore, is more appropriately applied to this than to those species which have the whole head of a darker colour than the rest, resembling a hood. With the exception here mentioned, the whole plumage of this bird is coloured so much like that of the Laughing Gull, that we need not describe it. Its length is usually about thirteen inches, with a more slender bill and shorter feet. Those who have seen this rare visitor, with its brown mask, say that it can readily be distinguished from its congeners; but few have had this opportunity. One, in summer plumage, from Shetland, is described by Yarrell, and that is all; although Temminck wrote of it as common in the Orkneys, and occasionally appearing on the coast of England. Some even doubt whether it is a distinct species.

Sabine's and Bonaparte's Mews, again, are both species of which British naturalists know little or nothing from actual observation. The first was discovered by Captain Sabine on the west coast of Greenland, at a breeding station on some low rocky islands, where it associated with the Arctic Tern. The second is stated by Swainson and Richardson to be common in all parts of the Fur countries, and has been met with by Audubon in various parts of the east coast of North America. Very pretty birds are they

both, without mark to distinguish them from each other as to form, or colour of plumage. Of more slender form, and with longer wing than most of the Gulls, they more resemble the Terns, which will be presently described.

The Little Mew is another species of whose habits we scarcely know anything. It is the smallest of its genus, and was first described and figured as a British bird by Montagu, from a young specimen which was shot on the Thames near Chelsea. Several have been shot in Britain since then; still it is a very rare bird. Like Sabine's Mew, it has a very distinctly marked greyish black head, forming the hood, which gives such a remarkable and characteristic appearance to many species of Gulls. Its length is about ten inches and a-half. Russia, Siberia, the Caspian Sea, the Mediterranean, the Swiss Lakes, and the Baltic, are included in its distribution.

Ross's ROSY GULL (*Rhodostethia Rossii*), sometimes called the Cuncate-tailed Gull.—A very beautiful species this, measuring about fourteen inches in length, and as rare as beautiful. Only two specimens appear to have been taken in Britain, and but few have been obtained in the arctic regions, which it is supposed principally to inhabit. The back and wings are a clear pearl-grey, the longer feathers of the latter having the outer webs blackish brown, and some whitish. Some feathers near the eye, and a collar round the neck, are pitch black; the rest of the plumage white, the whole of the lower parts being tinged with rose colour. The margins of the eyelids are orange, and the legs and feet vermilion. The wings are about an inch longer than the tail, of which the middle exceed the side feathers by an inch or so; hence the term cuncate, first applied to the bird by Dr. Richardson.

We have now brought our chapter on Gulls to a conclusion, and some of our readers will no doubt be surprised to find how numerous are the species belonging to this family which visits our islands. When we speak of Sea Gulls, we think only of those white-winged, active birds, which we see

skimming over the surface of the ocean, or sitting, light as snow flakes, on the rising and falling billows, with but one or two species of which we are at all generally acquainted. But here we have a large family circle, every member of which has some distinguishing peculiarity, not always, however, obvious to the casual observer. Having, as fully as our space permitted, described these, we may now make a few observations on Gulls generally ; and let us, at the outset, enquire, are they such foolish birds, that the name applied to them should form a synonym for one easily cheated ? — that Ben Jonson should make one of his characters say— •

Had you no quirk, sir,
To avoid *gulling* by such a venture ?

And another—

You know I am not easy to be *gull'd*.

And yet another—

Now will I *gull* these ganders rarely.

How is it that all English authors have agreed to accept the name of a fool and a Gull as synonymous, we say ? Perhaps Mrs. Jameson may help us to explain this. In her 'Winter Studies and Summer Rambles,' she says, describing the passages near Lake Huron : ' But what was really very touching was to see the poor Gulls. Sometimes we would startle a whole bevy of them, as they were floating gracefully on the waves, and they would rise, soaring away beyond our reach ; but the voyageurs suspended their paddles, imitated exactly their own soft, low whistle, and then the wretched, foolish birds, just as they had been so many women, actually wheeled round in the air, and came flying back to meet the "fiery death." ' Our author is not very complimentary on her sex here—lured to destruction, she would imply, as easily as a Gull. But, had we space, we could cite many examples to show that the Gulls are really very cunning birds, and by no means so easily lured to destruction as might be supposed.

Let us then hear no more of the foolishness of Gulls ;

they are as wise in their generation as their necessities require, and what more are we?

The Gulls have been accused of a desire to thrust their spoons, that is, their bills, into everybody's mess. They are greedy birds, say some, delighting in the flesh and blubber of dead whales, and such like oily food.

We know an old gentleman who used to go to Billingsgate for a fish dinner every year, and this annual pilgrimage to the piscatorial shrine was his great religious duty; the day was his Easter-day and all the great festivals rolled into one. What he ate on those occasions—what slippery eels went down his throat, and streams of butter with his delicious turbot or salmon, who shall tell! And he was but one of a large class. If we had gone into that handsomely-furnished dining saloon, we should have seen 'fifty feeding like one.' And were they Gulls? Not they; only gluttons, and they love—how they *do* love!—the green fat of the turtle. It seems to be in the nature of things that all lovers of fish should be gourmands, and *vice versâ*. So the Gulls, and all their relatives who feed on the inhabitants of the deep, are voracious eaters, when they get a chance of being so. The Dutch fabulist, Jacob Cats, we may remember, takes occasion to have a fling at the birds we are defending. One of his 'Moral Emblems' is called the Biter Bitten, and is illustrated with a cut representing a poor Sea Mew, which had thrust his bill between the open valves of an oyster, in search of a delicious morsel, caught by the sudden closing of the shell, and struggling in vain for release. So might our aldermen struggle for release from the pangs of dyspepsia after a fish dinner.

Gulls are very useful birds in a garden; they devour slugs, snails, worms, and all destructive creatures of the kind: sometimes, it seems, they fly at larger game. Here is an instance, clipped from a local paper:—'The Common Sea Gull is very voracious. Two of these birds, which run in the grounds of a gentleman at Canterbury, devoured in one day fourteen mice and two rats, and one of them swallowed a very large rat, whole. The bird made several efforts to gorge the animal, and at length succeeded, to the astonishment of the bystanders; the tail was visible for several minutes.'

Often within the circumscribed space of a piece of cultivated ground, where they must be kept by having their wings clipped, they will live many years. Let us quote also a paragraph which illustrates this:—‘One’ of these birds died at Redcar last week. It had been in the garden of Mrs. Walton, in that place, for the long period of thirty-eight years. His exact age is not known, as he was full grown when caught. This probably is an instance of the longest life of this bird on record.’

And now to finish our gossip about Gulls with a rhyme, let us take Gerald Griffin’s spirited

Lines Addressed to a Seagull Seen off the Cliffs of
MOHER, CLARE.

White bird of the tempest! Oh, beautiful thing!
With the bosom of snow and the motionless wing,
Now sweeping the billow, now floating on high,
Now bathing thy plumes in the light of the sky;
Now poising o’er Ocean thy delicate form,
Now breasting the surge with thy bosom so warm;
Now darting aloft with a heavenly scorn,
Now shooting along like a ray of the morn;
Now lost in the folds of the cloud-curtained dome,
Now floating abroad like a flake of the foam;
Now silently poised o’er the war of the main,
Like the Spirit of Charity brooding o’er pain;
Now gliding with pinion all silently furled,
Like an angel descending to comfort the world!
Thou seem’st to my spirit as upward I gaze,
And see thee, now clothed in mellowest rays;
Now lost in the storm-driven vapours that fly
Like hosts that are routed across the broad sky!
Like a pure spirit true to its virtue and faith,
’Mid the tempests of nature, of passion and death!
Rise, beautiful emblem of purity, rise,
On the sweet winds of Heaven to thine own brilliant skies,
Still higher! still higher! till lost to our sight,
Thou hidest thy wings in a mantle of light.
And I think how a pure spirit gazing on thee,
Must long for that moment—the joyous and free,
When the soul, disembodied from nature, shall spring,
Unfetter’d, at once to her Maker and King;
When the bright day of service and suffering past,
Shapes fairer than thine shall shine round her at last;
While, the standard of battle triumphantly furled,
She smiles like a victor serene on the world!

CHAPTER XXIII.

SEA SWALLOWS—THE CASPIAN, RUPPELL'S, SANDWICH, COMMON, ARCTIC, ROSEATE, AND LITTLE TERNS—THE BLACK, WHITE-WINGED, AND WHISKERED MARSH TERNS—THE GULL-BILLED TERN — THE NODDY.

THE birds of the family *Sterninæ*, including Terns and other species, are often called Sea Swallows, on account of their slender elongated forms, long pointed wings, and peculiarly buoyant, bounding, and gliding mode of flight. They are smaller than the Gulls, with which they have close affinity, being very similar in form, colouring, and habits. They feed on small fishes and crustacea, seeking their food chiefly along the shores of the ocean; some, however, subsist on insects, which they obtain in fresh water. They nestle on the ground, sometimes in bushes, laying from two to four spotted eggs. The young are covered with down and soon walk, but generally remain about their birthplace until able to fly. Five genera have representations in the British fauna, including twelve species.

THE CASPIAN TERN (*Sylochelidon Caspia*).—This is the largest European species of the Tern family, measuring about twenty inches in length. On account of its comparatively large bill, it has been assumed to be more rapacious than others of its family, and referred to a separate genus, called *Sylochelidon*, the term meaning Swallow of Prey. But few specimens of this bird, which has the hind part of the head black, wing-coverts bluish grey, quills greyish brown, and rest of the plumage white, have been obtained in England. It is said to inhabit the Caspian Sea, the Grecian Archi-

pelago, some other parts of the Mediterranean, the Baltic, Holland, France, Switzerland, as well as to be found at Senegal, and the Cape of Good Hope.

RUPPELL'S TERN (*Sterna Velox*).

SANDWICH TERN (*S. Cantiaca*).

COMMON TERN (*S. Hirundo*).

ARCTIC TERN (*S. Arctica*).

ROSEATE TERN (*S. Dougallii*).

LITTLE TERN (*S. Minuta*).

We have here a list of the British members of the genus *Sterna*, which includes what may be called the true Terns, the typical birds of the family. Of the first of these we need only say that it is very rare indeed; but a single specimen having been taken in this country, as recorded in the Annals of Natural History for Sept. 1847. It is as large a bird as the Caspian species, and is coloured much like the common Tern.

The second of the above species, named after a town in Kent, on whose sandy flats it was first observed in 1784, measures about thirteen inches in length. The upper part of the head and nape are deep black, the back and wings ash grey; the rest of the plumage white, with a rosy tinge on the under parts, which is brightest in summer. The bill of this bird is rather longer than the head, black, with the points yellowish; the wings extend a little beyond the deeply-forked tail: it is a regular summer visitant with us, appearing in spring, and departing in autumn, after having reared the yearly brood. It breeds in the shingly banks about Romney Marsh, Kent; the eggs have been taken at the mouth of the Blackwater river, in Essex, and it is not uncommon on the coasts of Norfolk and Suffolk. Mr. Selby has particularly noticed its annual visits to the Faroe islands, and says:—

Here a station is selected apart from other species, generally on a higher site, and the nests are so close to each other as to render it difficult to cross the ground without breaking the eggs, or injuring the unfledged young. Upon this coast it is called, *par excellence*, 'the Tern,' all the other species passing under the general name of 'Sea Swallows.' The eggs of this bird are three or four in number,

placed in a shallow hole scratched among the sea campion, or other plants growing in the selected spot; they are about two inches in length, of a yellowish stone colour, thickly spotted with ash grey, orange brown, or deep red brown, subject to considerable variety.

The Common Tern is a bird with several aliases to its name; sometimes it is called Kirmew, sometimes Pictarne or Picket, at others Spurre, and, again, Tarney or Tarret; its Latin name means Swallow Tern. It is about fifteen inches in length, has a slender bill as long as its head, two-thirds of it coral red like the feet; the rest, which is the tip, black, like the upper part of the head and nape; the back and wings are light greyish blue, all the rest white, the breast having a slight tinge of grey; the tail is deeply forked.

This bird frequents many parts of the coasts of Britain and its islands during summer and the first half of autumn. It arrives in the south of England in the beginning of May, colonies remaining there while others proceed along the shores on both sides of the island. It is stated to be less common on the eastern side, and more plentiful on the southern; but there are few extreme points of the coast on which it is not to be met with. Montagu says it is to be found in great abundance on parts of the Sussex and Kentish coasts, particularly about Winchelsea, and from thence to Dungeness. It visits most of the countries of Europe, from the Adriatic to the Baltic; and has been found in Madeira, the Canary Isles, Senegal, and the southern extremity of Africa. Macgillivray gives this account of its habits:—

With us the Terns arrive in straggling flocks in the beginning of May, and soon after betake themselves to their breeding-places, which are sandy tracts, gravelly or pebbly ridges on the shore, rocky ground, or sometimes low rocks. In the latter kind of situation they make an imperfect nest of bits of grass, or fragments of sea-weeds; but on sand they merely form a depression. The eggs, generally three, sometimes two or four, are about an inch and two-thirds in length, but they vary much in size, and considerably in form; their general colour yellowish-grey, pale greenish-brown, or greenish-blue, with blotches and spots of brown, sometimes mixed with purplish-grey. The birds usually sit upon them by day, unless in sunny weather, or when they are much disturbed, and always at night, as

well as when the air is moist. On going up to a breeding-place, which may be always discovered from a distance, as some of the birds are to be seen flying about it, one is sure to be met by several of them, which hasten to remonstrate with him by harsh cries and threatened blows. As he draws nearer, more of them leave their nests; and at length they are all on wing, wheeling and bounding, now high, now low, at times coming quite close, and increasing their cries, which resemble the syllables *cree, cree, cree-ae*.

When walking along the sandy shore—no bird nearer, perhaps, than a quarter of a mile—you may see one or two of them coming up from a distance, increasing their cries as they approach, then wheeling and plunging over and around you, and at length flying off. Proceeding at a moderate height, they stop now and then, hover a moment, dip into the water, and secure a sand-eel or young coal-fish. Many attend on the fishermen or others who are catching sand-eels for bait or food, to pick up those which slip from them disabled. On such occasions they are very vociferous, as they also are when they have fallen in with a shoal of fry. They never dive; but I have often seen them alight on the water, and swim a little, and sometimes a whole flock may be observed reposing on the placid bosom of the waters, affording a very pleasing spectacle. They are very bad walkers, but on wing their movements are easy and elegant. They skim along, boundingly, with great speed, ascend or descend, deviate to either side, stop short in an instant, hover in one spot like a hawk, drop, dive, or plunge headlong, with surprising adroitness. Their mode of flying, however, does not resemble that of a swallow, and they obtain the popular name of Sea Swallows, rather on account of their forked tail.

In very stormy weather they fly little, but shelter themselves by lying on the shore. When satiated with food, or tired, they rest in the same manner, and when the young are about to fly, the whole colony often settle at night on some sand-point projecting into the sea, or on an elevated beach. During moonlight their cries may often be heard at night; and sometimes, at low water, they search the shore for sand-eels at that season. When the young have been fed for some time by their parents, after leaving the breeding-places, they begin to separate from them, and at length live mostly apart. By the middle of September they have all left our northern coasts, and by the end of that month they have disappeared from the southern. Some individuals occasionally remain during winter in the south of England.

Macdougall's, or the Roseate Tern, is of the same form and size as the two last species, from which it may be distinguished by the delicate roseate tint of the white under parts; the bill is rather longer than the head, slender and black all but the base, which is orange red. The head and

nape of this species again are black, the back and wings greyish blue, the rest of the plumage white. A very elegant and delicately tinted little bird this; the first specimen obtained in Britain was by Dr. Macdougall of Glasgow, in 1812, on the Cumbrays, two small rocky islands in Milford Bay, Firth of Clyde. It was afterwards found breeding in considerable numbers in the Fern Islands, by Mr. Selby, who states that—

It is easy to be distinguished, when on wing, from all the other species, its flight being peculiarly buoyant, and sustained by a slower stroke of the pinions. The length of the tail is also characteristic, and its cry is different in expression, resembling the word *crake*, in a key not unlike that of the Land Crake. It breeds in the outskirts of the station occupied by the Arctic Tern, and the eggs much resemble those of that bird. It has occurred in several of the English counties, but not commonly. Its distribution is said to extend from Lapland and Norway to Italy, Madeira, the Cape of Good Hope and India. Audubon found it breeding abundantly, in company with the Sandwich Tern, on the Florida Reefs, but never met with it on any part of the eastern coast of the United States.

The Arctic Tern was formerly confounded with the Common Tern, and at a little distance the two species appear to be identical; but, if examined closely, the latter bird can be easily distinguished from the former by the bluish colour of the lower parts, the greater extent of the tail beyond the wings and the uniform deep red tint of the bill, the top of which is sometimes more or less dusky.

This bird is about fifteen inches and a half long; the deep black on the head above, and upper part of the hind neck is tinged with green; the feet, like the bill, are a rich carmine. It appears on our coasts in the beginning of May, and is very abundant in the outer Hebrides, the Shetland, Orkney, Fern Islands, as well as on the western and eastern coasts of Scotland. Northward it extends to Norway, Iceland, and Greenland. Mr. Audubon found it at Labrador, and the Arctic voyagers found it abundantly on the shores of the Frozen Ocean. Mr. Temminck supposes it to belong permanently to the North, where, however, it has been seen only in the summer, and to represent the common species in the regions of the Arctic circle.

The Lesser Sea Swallow, as the Little Tern is sometimes called, is the smallest British member of its family, being about ten inches long; the wings of this species are one inch longer than the deeply forked tail, and, like the back, are a pale bluish grey, with the outer quills greyish black; the head and nape are black; the forehead, like the centre parts of the body, white. This pretty little species arrives in the beginning of May, and settles here and there along the sandy shores, from the coasts of England to the Orkney Islands. It is often met with on the eastern coast, but rarely on the western. Its habits are much like those of the Arctic and common Terns. Here is a picture of them drawn by Macgillivray:—

In the elegance of its buoyant flight, as it skims over the waters, or shoots along on its way to or from its breeding-place, the tiny creature must be an object of admiration to every lover of nature. You may see a pair coming up from a distance, flying at the height of a few yards above the waves, their long wings winnowing the air, and impelling them in starts, as it were, as they wend their way in undulating and wavering movements. Suddenly their flight is arrested over a large pool left on the sands by the retiring tide; with quick beats of their wings they hover stationary, or but slightly shifting their place, and with downward pointed bill seem intent on something which they perceive in the water. One drops, but not like a stone; dips, but with upraised wings; and rises with a small fish in its bill. The other is similarly successful. Onward they proceed, now and then emitting a shrill cry, and with gentle beats of their wings. Far ahead is a flock engaged in picking up their prey, and onward they speed to join their kindred. At many miles distance from their breeding-places they may be met with; and yet they generally do not wander very far, as they can procure an abundant supply of food along the sands. Sometimes they may be seen sitting on the smooth water, and occasionally resting on the sands.

THE BLACK MARSH TERN (*Hydrochelidon nigra*), sometimes called the Black Tern, the Blue Darr or the Car Swallow.

THE WHITE-WINGED MARSH TERN (*H. leucoptera*).

THE WHISKERED MARSH TERN (*H. leucopareia*).

The Marsh Terns, whose generic name, *Hydrochelidon*, means Water Swallows, differ from the others of their family chiefly in having the tail less forked, and in pre-

ferring fresh-water marshes to the shores of the sea; hence, in the works of some naturalists they constitute a distinct genus. Macgillivray does not find that they present such differences in the bill or feet, or even in their wings or tail, as would fully justify a distinction of this kind. He, therefore, admits the genus, only with doubt, being unable to define it with precision. The first of the species above-named is about eleven inches and a half in length; the hind neck, breast, and abdomen, are greyish black; the upper parts dark bluish grey; the bill black, feet dark reddish brown. The wings extend about two inches beyond the tail.

The Black Tern is of very extensive distribution, it having been found in Sweden, Holland, Switzerland, France, and Italy; the Caucasus, Madeira, and the United States of America. It resides in marshes, and on the margins of lakes and rivers; and, according to Temminck, is very numerous in Holland, and the great marshes of Hungary. In England it appears to have been much more plentiful than it now is; some of its principal breeding-places having been entirely drained. It is still, however, found in Kent, Lincolnshire, and occasionally in other counties in England, where it arrives in the beginning of May, and whence it departs about the end of September. Montagu describes the flight of the Black Tern as 'not unlike that of the goatsucker; its evolutions are rapid, and its turns short, by which means it sometimes escapes the talons of predacious birds.' Of this he once witnessed an instance in which the Tern avoided the deadly stroke of a Peregrine, which pounced on him from a superior elevation repeatedly, without success.

About the middle of May this species prepares a nest of flags, or broad grass, in the most marshy places, upon a tuft just above the surface of the water, and lays almost invariably four eggs, which Yarrell describes as of a dark olive brown, blotched and spotted with black.

The second and third of the above-named species are both very rare birds with us, only one specimen of each having, we believe, been taken in this country; the former is described by Temminck as inhabiting the bays and gulfs of the

Mediterranean, as very common about Gibraltar, and as visiting the lakes, rivers and marshes beyond the Alps. It is found commonly in most of the Italian lakes, and sometimes on that of Geneva, but never in Holland. It is included among the birds of Germany and Scandinavia. Its length is about eight inches; has the head, neck, forepart of back, breast, belly, and lower wing-coverts, deep black; hind part of back and shoulders greyish black; large wing-coverts bluish grey; rest of the plumage pure white; the bill is reddish brown, and feet coral red.

The Whiskered Tern is a larger bird, described by Yarrell, who first introduced it into the British fauna, as measuring eleven inches and a half. It has the upper part of its head and nape deep black; a pure white band from the base of the bill beneath the eyes to the ear-coverts, throat greyish white, shaded into pure grey on the breast, and into blackish grey on the belly and sides; all the upper parts, wings, and tail of an uniform deep grey. The bill and feet are bright red. Both these birds are said to live much on aquatic insects, dragon-flies, moths, &c.

THE GULL-BILLED TERN (*Gelochelidon Anglica*).

'This species is said to be identical with the Marsh Tern of Wilson's North American Ornithology: it was first made known as a British bird by Montagu, who figured and described it in the supplement to his 'Ornithological Dictionary,' published in 1813. It differs from the other Marsh Terns in having a stouter and shorter bill, with a greater prominence on the lower mandible; and for this reason it has been made to represent a distinct genus, called *Gelochelidon*, which arrangement, however, is not generally adopted.

This bird is about fourteen inches and a half long; the upper part of its head is black; of the body, pale greyish blue; the rest of the plumage white. It is said by Temminck to be common in Hungary and the confines of Turkey, and to have been met with in various parts of Europe; in India and its islands, as well as in America, from Brazil to the Southern States.

THE COMMON NODDY (*Megaloptyerus stolidus*). — The

Noddies are distinguished from the other members of the Tern family in nothing very essential, except in their dusky colour, graduated tail, and stouter wings. They are the most oceanic of all Terns, seeking their food at vast distances from land, and seizing it while they skim along the surface, or sometimes while swimming. But one species belonging to this genus, called *Megalopterus*, visits Britain. The Noddy, as it is commonly called, measures about sixteen inches in length. Except the upper part of the head, which is pale ash grey, the whole of the plumage is brownish black. But two examples of this bird, shot at the same time, viz. in the summer of 1840, off the coast of Wexford, have been taken in this country; although it is said to be a summer visitant to the St. George's Channel, seeking its food some distance from land, but occasionally pursuing its prey into the estuaries of the larger fresh rivers.

Temminck mentions that the Noddy has been seen on the coast of France, and Dr. Latham states that the eggs of the bird are laid in vast numbers on some small rocky islands near St. Helena.

Audubon, who gives the fullest account of this species, says:—

The Noddies collect, about the beginning of May, from all parts of the Gulf of Mexico and coasts of Florida, for the purpose of returning to their breeding-places on one of the Tortugas, called Noddy Key. They form regular nests of twigs and dry grass, which they place on the bushes and low trees, but never on the ground. They often repair the nests of former years, in some instances the structure reaching the height of nearly two feet. The eggs are three in number, averaging two inches in length, of a yellow reddish colour, spotted and patched with dull red and faint purple.

We ought not to conclude our account of the members of the Tern family without quoting Bishop Mant's lines thereon:—

The Muse may make far-off descent
On the rich shores of southern Kent,
Or bleak Northumbria's isles of fern,
Discursive with the rapid Tern;
And note their congregated flight,
Now soaring up the aerial height,
Now pouncing on the fishy main,
Now wheeling round and round again.

Th' ear-piercing clamour, loud and shrill ;
 The slender head, the awl-like bill,
 The pinions' pointed length of sail,
 The tapering form, the forked tail,
 The motions nimble, light, and free,
 That mark those 'swallows of the sea.'

We cannot more fitly conclude this brief account of the
 Sea Birds than by quoting Bryant's

STANZAS TO A WATERFOWL.

Whither, midst falling dew,
 While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
 Far through their rosy depths dost thou pursue
 Thy solitary way?

Vainly the fowler's eye
 Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
 As, darkly painted on the crimson sky,
 Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink
 Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
 Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
 On the chafed ocean-side?

There is a Power, whose care
 Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—
 The desert and illimitable air,
 Lone wandering, but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,
 At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere;
 Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
 Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end :
 Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
 And scream among thy fellows ; reeds shall bend
 Soon o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'rt gone—the abyss of heaven
 Hath swallowed up thy form : yet, on my heart,
 Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
 And shall not soon depart.

He, who from zone to zone
 Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
 In the long way that I must tread alone,
 Will lead my steps aright.

APPENDIX.

ON DOVES AND PIGEONS.

THE order of birds entitled *Gemitores*, or Cooers, consists of a single family, *Columbinæ*, Doves or Pigeons, which are found in all warm and temperate parts of the globe, but are much more abundant and exhibit the most beautiful tints in the former, often rivalling the parrots in the splendour of their plumage. Only four species occur in Britain—namely, the RING DOVE, or CUSHAT (*Columba Palumbus*), sometimes called the Wood Pigeon, Quest, or Cushie Doo.



THE WHITE-BACKED, or ROCK DOVE (*C. Livia*), known also as the Wild, or Rock Pigeon, the Wild, or Rock Dove.

THE BLUE-BACKED DOVE (*C. Œnas*), known as the Stock, or Wood Dove, or Pigeon.

THE TURTLE DOVE (*C. Turtur*), sometimes called the Ring-necked Turtle.

Of these four species, the three first are constant residents with us, the last is migratory, remaining in the south of England during the

summer months only. They are all beautiful birds, with an iridescent play of colours about the neck and head; but on the whole are rather characterised by harmony and sobriety of tint, than by gorgeous colouring. Gentle and retiring in their manners, with a soft note, and a look that seems half timid and half confiding, they have been, by common consent, the emblems of gentleness and devoted affection, being constantly alluded to as such in the works of the old poets, from whom we might cull many beautiful passages in proof of this, had we space for them. But the Dove, we must remember, has been considered to typify that which is far holier and higher than earthly love. In sacred symbolism the Holy Spirit is always represented under the form of a Dove descending from heaven. This symbol was used in the earliest ages of the church, and we frequently hear of gold and silver doves being suspended above the altar, as types and emblems of the Holy Spirit.

Of our native Doves that called the Ring Dove, Wood Pigeon, or Cushat, is the largest, generally measuring about seventeen inches and a half; it is, perhaps, not so remarkable for elegance of form, and beauty of colouring, as the other native species, although it is by no means deficient in these claims to admiration. It is a strong, robust bird, with a large full body, short neck, small head, short strong feet and rather long wings and tail; the upper parts of its plumage are greyish blue, the shoulders and wings having a brownish tinge; the upper part and sides of the neck are green and purplish, and changing according to the light it is viewed in.

Like to the changing colours that we see
About the dove's neck, for variety,

says the old pastoral poet William Brown, alluding to the iridescent appearance of the necks of most birds of this family. There are two cream-coloured patches also on the neck, the fore part of which, and the breast, are light and dark purple; the downy part of the plumage is greyish white; across the middle of each wing there is a white mark, formed by the projecting edges of the wing coverts, which are of that colour.

In all the wooded districts of England and Scotland we find this bird, which generally avoids bare and uncultivated regions; as it does not, like some of its family, repose or nestle among rocks, but in trees, especially beech, ash and pine, or in hedgerows, avenues and plantations, from whence it issues at sunrise in search of food, which consists of seeds of the cultivated cereal grasses, such as wheat, barley, oats, as well as of leguminous plants, such as beans and peas, and of the field mustard and charlock. Indeed, scarcely any seeds or grain, small or large, come amiss to this bird, which will even swallow whole beech nuts and acorns; its bill not being sufficiently strong to break them.

Although not so decidedly gregarious as the Rock Dove, yet these birds are sometimes seen in large flocks in the winter, when, however, it is generally supposed that the greater part of them have passed

to the continents of Asia and Africa, where food is more abundant at that season. The nest of the Ring Dove is to be found in woods and plantations, generally on a branch, or in the fork of an oak, beech, fir, or other suitable tree; often high up out of reach, but sometimes, especially if on a fir or pine, but a few feet from the ground. It is composed of a few twigs bent together very loosely. Bishop Mant tells us—

How in the depth of solemn groves
The Cushat and the Turtle Doves
On the tall fir of transverse sticks
Their artless dwelling rudely fix,
Where on the gazers' eye below
Gleam their twin eggs of drifted snow.

Here, if you listen for awhile, you may hear the note of the bird, often deeper and more pleasant than that of the Rock Dove, which may be imitated by pronouncing the syllables *coo roo, coo roo*, the two last protracted. And if a noise is made, so that the bird is startled from its leafy retreat, the picture drawn by John Aird in these lines will be realised—

The Cushat, startled from her ivied tree;
Comes clapping out above him, down right o'er
The river takes, and folding her smooth wings,
Shoots like an arrow up the woody fall
Of yon high steep, and o'er it bears away,
The loveliest feat in all the flight of birds.

The Rock Dove, which is said to be the original of our domestic pigeons, is a very beautiful bird; the general colour of the plumage is light greyish blue; the neck is resplendent with green and purplish red; the middle of the back and lower wing coverts are white; there are two black bands across the wing; the bird is brownish black, the length is about fourteen inches.

This bird occurs in great numbers in the Hebrides, Shetland and Orkney Islands, and along the rocky shores of the northern parts of Scotland, and less plentifully here and there on the coasts of other parts of Britain, as well as Ireland. It resides in caves and crevices of rocks, feeds in the pastures on seeds of various kinds, has a very rapid flight, walks gracefully and quickly, is gregarious in winter and spring. The nest, rudely composed of small twigs, grass, &c., is placed in a sheltered part of the rocks; the purely white eggs are always two in number. The young taken from the nest are easily tamed; but if let loose, they will generally revert to a wild state again.

The Stock Dove is about the same size as the former species, and similarly coloured, only that the rump is blue instead of white. It occurs in various parts of England, residing in woods, and searching the fields for seeds and other vegetable substances. It generally nestles in a hole of a decayed tree, or on a stump or pollard; hence, as some say, the origin of the name 'Stock;' others derive it from its being supposed by the older writers, who confounded this species with the Rock Dove, to be the original stock of the several varieties of domestic Pigeons.

The Turtle Dove is more slender in its form, and smaller altogether than either of the preceding species, being but little over eleven inches in length; the head is light bluish grey; the back greyish brown; the shoulders and small wing coverts black, with broad light red margins; the breast pale greyish purple; on the neck are two large black spots, bounded with white, hence the term Ring-necked, or Collared Turtle applied to it. We know not whether it is this or some other collared species the Persian poet alludes to —

Know'st thou why round his neck the dove
A collar wears? It is to tell
He is the faithful slave of love,
And serves all those who serve him well.

This is a strictly migratory species, arriving in England at the end of spring, and dispersing itself over many of the southern and eastern counties. A few individuals have been seen in Scotland. Its habits are similar to those of the Wood Pigeon. Bechstein describes it as a very favourite and cleanly chamber bird, which makes itself particularly agreeable, not only by its beauty, tameness, and affectionate disposition, but because it is supposed to attract to itself the diseases of the owner — which belief, we need hardly say, is a fallacy. The cooing of the male is very peculiar, consisting of a deep humming kind of noise. It has been known to live eight or nine years in confinement. It is this species which has been looked upon above all others as the emblem of devoted affection, and to which, when the poets specify a particular kind of dove at all, they most frequently allude. Thus, Leonard Digges, a writer of the sixteenth century, says:—

When thou in native thoughts didst imitate
The simple Turtle Dove,
And constant wert; I still did consecrate
To thy true faith, firm love.
That rural bird doth never range;
Fix'd to her mate, affects no change.

And the incomparable Sir Philip Sidney says:—

Time doth work what no man knoweth,
Time doth us the subject prove;
With time still affection groweth
To the faithful Turtle Dove.

DOVES IN CONFINEMENT.

Owing to their seldom or never becoming thoroughly domesticated so that it would be safe to leave them at liberty, these birds cannot be kept in the open Pigeon-house or Dove-cot, as it is often called. They are, therefore, commonly confined in large wicker cages, or placed in an aviary with a wire netting in front. In every other respect they are to be treated like the Pigeons, for the keeping, feeding, &c., of which directions are given farther on. Foreign Doves from tropical countries of course require a greater degree of warmth than others, and must be carefully protected in winter.

FANCY PIGEONS.

It is a mistake to suppose, as many do, that the Pigeon fancy is a modern taste. There are many passages in the classics which serve to show that different varieties of these birds were cultivated in very ancient times, and that the choicest of them fetched extremely high prices. Thus Columella is scandalised at the inverte-
racy and extravagance of the Pigeon fancy among his countrymen; and M. Varro records it as the shame of his age that persons should be found to purchase a couple of these birds at the price of about 32*l*. What would he have said to 60*l*. for a pair of the large Blue-crowned Indian Pigeons, and 100*l*. for a pair of Impeyan Pigeons? or, worse still, 400*l*., which Yarrell says is the market price of a really fine Tiger?

Pliny speaks thus of the Pigeon mania among the Romans:—
'And many are mad with the love of these birds; they build towers for them on the tops of their roofs, and will relate the high breeding and ancestry of each after the Eastern fashion.'

So it seems that the custom of tracing back the pedigree of a choice pigeon, as an Arab does of his barb, was ancient in the time when Pliny wrote; and, indeed, all through the records of history, whether sacred or profane, and the myths and traditions with which much of it is obscured, we catch here and there a glimpse of the beautiful bird—now winnowing with white wings the thick mist and gloom which enveloped a submerged world; now fluttering in the hands of the priest, ready to be offered on the altar of daily sacrifice; now descending, like a gleam of light from heaven, an emblem of the all-pervading Spirit of Love and Holiness, to rest upon Him, of whose greater sacrifice all the Mosaic offerings were but types and foreshadowings; now amid the lurid smoke and fiery rain of beleaguered cities, and of blood-stained battle-fields; now in the sacred groves, and about the altars of heathen deities; in many instances considered a sacred and oracular bird. Everywhere do we see the Dove or Pigeon—for the terms are identical; cooing on the shoulder of Mahomet, and, as his followers say, communicating past, present, and coming events to the false prophet; probably this idea was taken from our Scriptures, in which the Dove figures as emblematical of the Holy Spirit, on which account a sage or holy man was sometimes represented with this bird whispering in his ear, words, we are to suppose, of Divine wisdom and foreknowledge; drawing the chariot of Venus, the goddess of beauty and of love; bearing vows of fidelity and expressions of passionate attachment from one devoted heart to another; sometimes, however, sterner messages, and news of disastrous defeat, or other great evil fallen upon an individual, a family, or a nation.

THE CARRIER.

Of all the varieties of the domesticated Pigeon, this is the most interesting, on account of its poetical and historical associations. From a very remote antiquity, these birds have been employed as winged messengers; and they are still so to some extent, although the facilities afforded by improved postal arrangements, and, more especially, the electric telegraph wires, have very much superseded them. We have written evidence that, at a very early period of Roman history, at the celebration of the Olympic games, the names of the victors were made known to those at a distance by means of these Pigeons, just as the name of the winning horse at a race, or the successful champion in a prize-fight, is at the present day.

Fuller, in his 'History of the Holy Wars,' tells us that, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Christians, the latter 'intercepted a letter tied to the legs of a dove (it being the fashion of the country both to write and send their letters under the wings of a fowl), wherein the Persian Emperor promised help to the besieged.' So, again, at the siege of Haarlem, as related by Thuanus, when the city was reduced to the last extremity, and on the point of opening its gates to a cruel and barbarous enemy, the citizens received intelligence of a design to relieve the city, by means of a letter tied under the wing of a Pigeon. Examples of this kind might be multiplied to any extent, and lines out of number quoted referring, or addressed to, the Carrier Pigeon or Dove, beginning with the ode of the Greek poet Anacreon, which Thomas Moore has so charmingly rendered. We have, however, to survey our 'bird messenger' in a more prosaic aspect, as one of the extensive family of Fancy Pigeons.

Most of our readers are, no doubt, familiar with the appearance of the Carrier; a lithe, active-looking bird, with bluish black or dun plumage (the latter are called 'Cinnamons,' and are least valued). A thorough-bred Carrier, to be perfect as a show-bird, must possess what are termed 'the twelve points,' viz. three of the head, which is long, straight, and flat on the top; three of the beak, which is long, straight, and thick; three of the wattle, which is broad at the base, short from the head to the bill, and leaning forward; three of the eye, which is large, round, and uniform. Other colours besides black and dun are sometimes met with, but they are not much valued by fanciers, as they have almost invariably black eyes, which is considered a great blemish.

The Carriers should be trained when young, and always kept in exercise, or they will become too fat and unwieldy for sustained and rapid flight. The way to train them is to take them first a short way from home, and then loose them, gradually increasing the distance. When sure of the bird returning to its breeding and feeding place, however great the number of miles which may intervene, it will be safe to entrust it with a despatch, which may be written upon a piece of common note paper, rolled up so that it occupies no more

space than a goose-quill, and securely fastened with silk or fine wire between two of the tail feathers; or sometimes it is rolled round the shank of the leg, and fastened with twine or worsted. There is a smaller bird of this variety, called the Antwerp Carrier, which is comparatively rare. The plumage is mostly mealy, with bright brown bars across the wings; the neck has a reddish tint; the forehead is full and round; and the eyes, like pink-tinted pearls, are full and glittering. They are shy and restless, and difficult birds to keep, if away from their native homes, to which they will be likely to return, if they are set at liberty.

The 'Liege,' or 'Short-faced Antwerp,' is supposed to be a cross between the Owl and the Turbit, two sorts of Pigeons which are common in the Low Countries, from whence that variety generally comes. The colour of its plumage is generally a mealy blue, or blue chequered. Fanciers call this bird 'the true,' and consider it more desirable than its more unsocial relative, because it soon becomes reconciled to a new home, and remains there. Fifty-six of these birds, brought from Liege to London, were, in July 1828, let loose in the neighbourhood of Aldersgate, at thirty-four minutes past four A.M., and all of them reached home by noon of the same day; the first accomplishing the distance, reckoned at about 300 miles, at twenty-four minutes past ten the same morning. In July 1829, in 'a flight against time,' forty-one birds were loosed at Maestricht, and the foremost one lost, although its speed averaged forty-five miles an hour. This will show what a Carrier Pigeon is expected to do.

The Carriers are neither such prolific breeders nor attentive parents as many other varieties; therefore, it is best for those who wish to possess them to purchase the eggs of some trustworthy dealer, and place them under a better setter. It is unsafe to buy old Carriers, as they will seldom remain in their new home.

It is a disputed question whether Carrier Pigeons are guided by sight, or by some mysterious instinct similar to that which guides the migratory birds in their long journeys through the air. Phrenologists say that the precision with which they fly from point to point is due to an excitement of the organ of locality; and electro-biologists affirm that some magnetic influence enables the birds to do this. We can only briefly mention these various theories, without pretending to adjudicate between them. There is no doubt that, as an advocate of phrenology observes, 'Among these animals, as among men, some are more easily taught than others; and the fanciers distinguish the best birds by the height and fullness of the membrane above the nostrils (where the organ of locality is said to be); and the method they practise to set off an indifferent bird is to raise this membrane, and puff up the part, by stuffing pieces of cork under it. This is one of 'the tricks of the trade,' against which the novice will have to be on his guard; and no trade appears to be more full of tricks than Pigeon-dealing.

In confirmation of the sight theory, it may be mentioned that the

Carrier is very likely to lose its way in thick, foggy weather; that it does not fly by night, but settles down to roost as soon as the darkness comes on; that it is unsafe to fly it long distances, unless it has been previously trained for the particular journey it has to accomplish; that is, taken over portions of its ground at a time, gradually lengthening the distance. Again, the best authorities recommend that the front of the pigeon-house, or a tall chimney, or some conspicuous object near, should be whitewashed, to serve as a landmark to the birds; and yet again it has been observed that, when the ground is covered with snow, so as to alter the face of the landscape, the Pigeons seem to miss their points of guidance, and are lost.

THE DOVE-HOUSE PIGEON.

This name is often given to what Dixon calls 'a mixed rabble of birds, produced by allowing all sorts of mongrels to breed together at will;' but, properly, it belongs to a distinct variety, if not, as some maintain, to a particular species, viz. the Blue Rock, described by some as *Columba Livia*, or, which is more likely, the Stock Dove, *C. Œnas*. To both of these Wild Doves this bird bears some resemblance in its form, size, and colouring. This is the commonest of all our domestic Pigeons. The general colour of the plumage is dark slate, the greater wing coverts being tipped with a lighter tint; the neck is glossed with green and purple reflections; the tail is barred with black; the eyes and feet are red, as is most common with Doves and Pigeons. Why the latter are so, an Arab legend tells us. When the Dove returned a second time to the ark, the appearance of its feet proved that the water was abating, for it had been able to walk in the red mud; and Noah prayed that the feet of Doves might always be of that colour, to commemorate the event.

Daniel Girton, in his 'New and Complete Pigeon Fancier,' says, 'The Dove-cote, or common Blue Pigeon, being both prolific and hardy, is most worthy the attention of country people;' and this kind will rear, if well fed and cared for, as many as eight, or even ten broods in the year. The young, when brought up by hand, become very tame; and there is no variety which exceeds them in docility and attachment, although in a wild, or partially wild state, they are very shy; and this, combined with their activity and great power of wing, causes them to be generally preferred by Pigeon shooters. By those who take part in the shooting matches, they are known as Blue Rocks, Duffers, or Rockies. This bird is everywhere found in a state of domestication; and there is no doubt that a great many of the varieties of 'Toys,' as the lower class of Fancy Pigeons are called, are of this kind, with slight changes or modifications, the result of crosses with other fancy kinds.

THE FANTAIL.

This is by some considered to be the most elegant of all our domestic varieties, and it really is a very elegant bird, although at times its appearance, in some of the attitudes which it assumes, is most grotesque.

Fantails are generally of a pure snowy white, and this with their peculiar way of bending back their somewhat long necks, until the head seems resting amid the feathers of the outspread tail, gives them somewhat the appearance of miniature swans. Sometimes they have slate-coloured patches on their shoulders like Turbits; and they are occasionally quite black. They are sometimes called Broad-tailed Shakers. 'Shakers,' as Willoughby says, 'because they do constantly shake or wag their heads up and down. Broad-tailed, from the great number of feathers in their tails, not fewer than twenty-six; when they walk up and down they do for the most part hold their tails erect like a hen or turkey cock.'

When one of these birds breeds with another kind of Pigeon, the broad tail will wholly, or in part, disappear; when the latter is the case, it is called a Half Fantail, or a Narrow-tailed Shaker; the appendage may be restored in all its plenitude and beauty by matching the half-breed with a true Fantail, whose points of perfection are—a neck tapering, and so long, that at times the bird's head will nestle amongst the tail feathers; a full prominent breast, and a tail always erect, which should never number less than twenty-four, nor more than thirty-six feathers; if it does, the weight of the tail will cause it to droop, which will greatly mar the beauty of the bird.

THE RUNT.

This is the largest and heaviest of the domestic varieties, and being very prolific, is the best for those who cultivate Pigeons exclusively or chiefly for the table; the weight of one ready for the spit sometimes exceeds a pound.

The Runts prefer roosting, or sitting on the ground, to perching on buildings or strutting on roofs, hence they have been called by Buffon *Pigeons Mondains*, or Ground Doves; it is best to accommodate them with a low house, or resting place, raised but a few feet from the ground, and any old rabbit hutch might easily be converted into a Runt locker, where they would breed and bring forth abundantly. Care must be taken, however, to protect them from roving cats, and other four-footed bird-destroyers.

One thing remarkable about the Runt is its extreme antiquity, the notices of them by Pliny and other nearly contemporary writers, are but modern records; for Dr. Buckland enumerates the bones of a Pigeon which, he says, must have closely resembled the Spanish Runt, among the fossil remains found in a cave at Rochdale. Ever

since the classic period these birds have been celebrated among the poultry produce of the shores of the Mediterranean, and to this day among the several varieties of Runts, that called the Roman is most esteemed, as being the largest and easiest to manage; next to this in the estimation of breeders is the Leghorn, which is shaped much like the Tumbler, but is very different in size and habit. Then there are the Spanish and Friesland Runts, and a kind which is brought from Russia, and sometimes sold as Russian Carriers, although they do not appear at all adapted for conveying letters or intelligence; and apropos of these birds, it may be mentioned that the Russians exceed the old Romans in extravagance as 'fanciers.' The Orloff family once expended £20,000 in Pigeons. The 'Runt' is generally a favourite with the Muscovites; but the latter have a greater favourite still, which flies in a spirally circular manner on one wing, pierces the clouds, and then descends on to the very finger from which the airy traveller had departed.

A recent work on Pigeons says that the Runt is remarkably short from the fall of the back of the neck to the root of the tail, and very full and broad-bosomed. It has a round head and sunken eyes, surrounded by a tough skin. A small wattle surrounds the base of the back, which is slightly hooked. The most favourite colours with 'the fancy,' are dark slate and red. If bred especially for the table, white mottled or pure white are the best, such having the most delicate flesh.

The Spanish Runt is the smallest of this group of Pigeons; it has a long body, and very short tail and neck. But the most curious of the Runts is the Friesland, his feathers being set the contrary way; so that, if you wish to stroke or caress it, you must begin at the tail and press your hand up to the neck. There is another variety, very scarce, called the Frill-back, which is invariably white, or cream coloured; the peculiarity of plumage, from which the name is derived, consists in the feathers of the back curling upwards, so that the points stand out, giving the bird a frizzed appearance. The cooing of the Runts is less distinct than that of other Pigeons, having a muffled sound; they breed freely with other domestic kinds.

THE TRUMPETER.

This may be considered as a kind of Runt, having what has been called a very Runtish shape. It is said to possess almost every quality desirable in a Pigeon; being hardy, a good breeder, having an attractive appearance, fattening early, and eating very tenderly. Trumpeters are described as 'generally pearl-eyed, black mottled, very feather-footed and legged, turn-crowned like the Nun, and sometimes like a Finnakin, but much larger, which are reckoned the better sort, as being more melodious; but the best characteristic to know them is a tuft of feathers growing at the root of the beak; and

the larger the tuft is the more are they esteemed; the reason of their name is from their imitating the sound of a trumpet after playing. The more excited they are, the more will they trumpet; therefore, if you have a mind to be entertained with their melody, you must give them plenty of hemp seed.'

The Trumpeter may probably owe its name more to its martial appearance than to its note, which does not differ greatly from the cooing of other Runts. The row of feathers at the back of the head somewhat resembles a helmet. Then there are the booted legs, and the fierce moustache at the base of the bill, combined with the bold defiant air, the upright carriage and strut, to give it a very soldier-like mien. A well-grown moustache is the great point to be insisted on in this kind of Pigeon, which also must possess a very round head. The ordinary colour is yellowish-white, but sometimes they are black and white, beautifully speckled. This is regarded by naturalists as one of the purest varieties of our domestic Pigeons; and it is said that the breed, if once crossed, cannot be bred back again; they are always deficient in some point, either the voice, or one of the turns of the helmet, or other peculiarity.

THE ARCHANGEL.

This is a rare and high-prized domestic variety which has scarcely yet found its way into the list of Fancy Pigeons, being of comparatively recent introduction; whether it owes its name from having been originally brought from the Russian port, or *via* Archangel from some other quarter, (as Tartary or India, which is most likely), does not appear to be known. The colouring of the bird is most rich and unique; the head, neck, fore part of the body and back, being chestnut or copper colour, with changeable hues in different lights; the hind wings and hinder parts of the body are a bluish black, but the colours of these parts, and the rich chestnut of the upper, do not terminate abruptly, but are gently shaded into each other. The iris is bright orange red; the feet, clean and unfeathered, are also bright red. Like the Trumpeter, this bird has a turn of feathers at the back of the head, and but for its peculiar richness of colouring, would be scarcely distinguishable from some specimens of that variety.

THE NUN.

This is a very charming variety, in shape somewhat like a tumbler, with a tuft of feathers rising from the back of its head. 'To be perfect,' says an authority, 'the head, flight feathers, and tail should be of some dark colour, either yellow, red, or black.' The breast, belly, upper part of the wings, back, and neck, should be pure white, and there should be a frill of white feathers over the

head. According to the colour of the head, it is called the Red, Black, or Yellow-headed Nun. If the bird have white or speckled feathers, where there should be one of these colours, it is called 'foul-feathered,' and its value is much less than it would have been if the feathers were pure in colour.' He should have a small head and beak, and the larger the tuft or hood is, the handsomer does the bird appear, and the more valuable is it reckoned by the fancy.' Temminck says that 'The most beautiful specimens of Nuns are those which are black, and have the quill feathers and the head white; they are called *Nonnains—Maurins*.'

But the most common sort, and very beautiful birds they are, are what Buffon styles *Coquille Hollandaise*, or Dutch Shell Pigeons, 'because they have at the back of their heads several feathers which form a sort of shell. They have the head black, the tip (whole?) of the tail, and the ends of the wings (quill feathers) also black, and all the plumage, which is very peculiar, and they seem to take their name entirely from it; their heads being, as it were, covered with a veil.

Two sub-varieties of the Nun are known to continental breeders; one, which they call the Beard Pigeon, has the flight feathers white, the head and tail being the only coloured parts; the other, named the Death's-head Pigeon, has the tail also white, the head only being coloured.

In size, Nuns are somewhat less than the common Dove-house Pigeons. They have a bold graceful flight, are fairly prolific, and by no means bad nurses. A peculiarity in the newly hatched chicks of the black-headed sort is, that their feet are frequently, perhaps always, of a dark lead colour.

THE JACOBIN.

'Where there are Nuns,' says Dixon, in his 'Dovecote and Aviary,' 'it is natural to look for Friars in the neighbourhood, and here they are, only not half so pretty nor half so good. The Jacobins are about the most unproductive of our pigeons; they lay small eggs, which they incubate unsteadily, and if they hatch them, nurse carelessly. It is best to transfer their eggs to some more trustworthy foster parents. These are included among the pigeons technically called "Toys;" Tumblers, Powters, and Carriers, being alone considered worthy the attention of fanciers.'

The Capuchin, Jacobite, Ruffled Jack, Ruff, are the various titles given to this bird, all having reference to peculiarities of ecclesiastical costume, which its plumage is thought to resemble. 'Jacobins,' says Willoughby, 'are called by the Low Dutch "Cappers," because on the hinder part of the head, or nape of the neck, certain feathers reflected upward, encompass the head behind, almost after the fashion of a monk's hood, when he puts it back to uncover his head.'

Jacobins are variously coloured—white and blue, white and black, or mottled; whatever the colour may be, however, they are not considered handsome, unless they have the head, tail and flight feathers white. The other essential points are, a small head and a short and spindled beak. Some are feathered to the toes, and others are bare, but this is not thought of much consequence. The closer and more compact the ‘frill’ or ‘hood’ grows, the greater the bird is prized; and on the ‘chum,’ as the lower part of the head feathers is called, the feathers should be of such length as to admit of their being lapped over in front of the bird.

According to a good authority, the different names given to this bird indicate distinct varieties; he says, ‘The Ruff is a pigeon very much like the Jacobite, and one which is often sold for it, but the true Ruff is altogether a larger bird; it has a larger head and longer beak; the chum of feathers does not flow down so near to its shoulders, but it is longer, and not so thick. The Capuchin may be considered as merely a variety of the same breed; it is larger than the Jacobite, and has a longer beak; the feathers of the ruff or head do not come down in the same manner, and form a chum, as in the other varieties.

THE TURBIT AND OWL.

This variety is much like the Jacobin in shape, but differs from it in not having the head covering which distinguishes the latter bird; it has, however, a compensation in the shape of a frilled shirt front, some of the breast feathers growing contrary ways, and standing out from the others.

French writers consider this bird to have greater claims to specific distinction than any other domestic breed; but this opinion wants confirmation.

Willoughby, who confesses himself unable to tell the meaning or origin of the name given to these birds, says ‘that they have a short thick bill, like a bullfinch; the crown of their head is flat and depressed, the feathers on the breast reflected both ways. They are about the bigness of the Jacobins, or a little bigger.’

Turbits are classed according to the colour of their shoulders as Nuns are by that of their heads. Thus we have the blue, and blue and yellow-shouldered Turbits; we have also birds of this variety all of one colour. ‘But,’ says a recent authority, ‘of wholly white Turbits, I have never seen any that might not with equal propriety be called Owls; for the distinction between the Owl and Turbit consists in the hind beak, gullet and frill, and although slight and scarcely observable to the uninstructed eye, yet there is sufficient difference to constitute them separate varieties. The beak of the Owl is more hooked, the upper mandible bending over the lower, which combined with their shy and wild nature, and their prominent-looking eyes, has given rise to their English name of

Owl Pigeon. The eye, too, is of a pencil, or gravel colour, very different from the Turbit's; the head is rounder, and the frill rarely so long.'

The Turbit's chief points of excellence are thus succinctly reckoned—a short bill, a full frill, and a small round head. Those of the Owl are thus enumerated—beak short and hooked; head round, yet well developed; frill rose-shaped; size small; general appearance wild; colour blue or silver, with black bars across the wings, and a light powdery end of each colour about the neck. In France they have a white variety of the Turbit, which they call *Pigeon Cravate Blanche*. The breeding places for Owls should be private and secluded, on account of their wild shy nature.

THE TUMBLER.

This bird is among the most beautiful, as it is certainly the most amusing, of the inhabitants of our dovecotes. He is the aerial acrobat of the feathered tribe, throwing back summersaults, and spinning about high up above the tree tops, in a most surprising manner.

'These birds,' saith Willoughby, 'are small and of diverse colours. They have strange motions, turning themselves backward over their heads, and show like footballs in the air.' Among the prettiest of them are those called Kites, which are self, or whole-coloured—that is, all black, or all cinnamon, in various shades, or cream colour. There are besides, those that have streaks, or markings of other colours, and these are termed 'splashes;' so we have the myrtle splash, cinnamon splash Tumblers, &c. But the whole, or uniformly coloured birds are most telling in a group, and the most ornamental. The Almond Tumbler is considered the choicest variety by 'the fancy,' and very beautiful are these tri-coloured birds, about which the anonymous author of a Treatise upon Fancy Pigeons observes:—'I have had some so remarkably beautiful in feather, that their flight, tail, back, and rump, have resembled a bed of the best and finest broken tulips that can be imagined, or a piece of the best and most highly polished tortoiseshell; for the more they are variegated, particularly in the flight (that is the wing feathers), and tail (provided the ground be yellow), the more they are esteemed. I have had some in my collection that have had few feathers in them but what have combined the three colours, black, yellow and white, variously and richly interspersed. In short, then, their beauty far surpasses all description, and nothing but the eye can convey a just idea of them.' And yet the little Tumbler, when performing his aerial evolutions, however beautifully variegated his plumage may be, looks only of one uniform dirt-colour; its intricate markings are all lost to the eye, except it be kept almost wholly as a cage-bird.

Again, to quote from the 'Treatise,' the Almond Tumbler is described as a very small pigeon, with a short body, short legs, a full chest, a thin neck, a very short and spindle beak, and a round button head, with the iris of the eye of a good bright pearl colour. And whose perfection is perhaps as great, if not the greatest curiosity in the whole fancy of Pigeons, and would take up a small volume to expatiate on, and enter such a description as it would admit of and really deserve.' What can we say after this? Nothing, except that the author is not by any means alone in his enthusiastic admiration of this merry little dancer upon nothing, which throws himself into the air, as boys do into a bath on a hot Midsummer day, and sports and revels there.

All Pigeon fanciers take delight in Almond Tumblers, and they have so, as they call it, improved upon the original breed by crosses and other contrivances, that their protégés have become monstrosities. And so we have Tumblers now that have the traditional name without any of the amusing qualities of the original birds. Dixon says, 'Tumblers have been bred with beaks so small that they cannot feed their own young, and with their frames so compact that they cannot fly to the top of their breeder's bedstead. They are called Tumblers only because, if they *could* fly, they *would* tumble. The variation of the species has been pushed to its utmost possible limits.'

Among the varieties of the Tumbler breed are the old English Tumbler, which has become nearly extinct; it is smaller than the ordinary sort, and an extremely high flier; its ordinary colour is blue. The German feather-footed breed, a large handsome bird, and a good breeder; the general colour of the plumage is black, with white feather festoons about the feet, called 'slippers.' But the best variety known is the common Flying Tumbler, of which there are as many sub-varieties as there are colours in the rainbow. They are distinguished by different names, according to the variations in their plumage. Thus, we have among the 'whole' coloured birds, blacks, blues, chequers, silvers, duns, reds, yellows, buffs, drabs, ash colours, and mealy; among the variegated, or mixed colour birds, the black, red, or mealy mottled; the mottled are whole-coloured birds except having white feathers sprinkled over the head, neck and shoulders. The gay mottled reverses this order, except in tail and flight, which must be dark; the remainder of the plumage white with a few dark feathers interspersed. When the mottling is regular, these birds are sometimes called Ermine Tumblers. Then there is the grizzle, blue or black, according to the ground, and the red grizzle or the strawberry, the terms being synonymous; the haggie, whose colours are between a grizzle and a mottle; a splashed and pink Tumbler, whose colours are divided into patches, which again give rise to distinctive names. And so on *ad infinitum*. Then there is the Bald-headed Tumbler, sometimes called the Piebald, or the Bald-pate, for shortness. And if variety is charming, here is enough of it

in all conscience. But the first care of a Tumbler breeder should be to procure well-shaped birds, with full breasts, short bodies, slender necks, pearly eyes, and beaks as straight as a goldfinch's. Colour is of comparatively little importance.

THE POWTER.

This is a very favourite breed of Pigeons with the 'fancy,' and it may certainly claim the distinction of being the most curious, if not the most handsome, member of its family. 'If,' says Dixon, 'as some writers hold, the inflation of the crop is the peculiar distinction of the pigeon, Powters ought to stand at the head of the whole *Columbinæ*.' They are enabled to distend the crop to an enormous extent, and seem to take a pride and pleasure in doing so. Provincially they are called Croppers, which appears to be not a vulgarism, but an old name for them, as Willoughby says, 'They are so called because they can, and generally do, by attracting the air, blow up their crops to that strange bigness, that they exceed the bulk of the whole body beside; and which, as they fly, and while they make that murmuring noise, swell their throats to a great bigness, and the bigger the better and more generous they are esteemed.' If a fancier wishes to form a judgement of the merits of one of these Pigeons, he puts his mouth to the bill of the bird, and blows away as if he were inflating a bladder through a pipe, and the crop swells and swells to its utmost capacity, till neck, and throat, and head too, are become lost in a vast protuberance, and the bird cuts a most ridiculous figure, standing nearly bolt upright, looking like a gentleman in a swallow-tailed coat and white pantaloons, whose shirt frill has taken to sprouting, and covered the upper part of him with a feathery efflorescence. And there he struts in a superbly ridiculous manner. Dixon compares him to Atlas with the globe under his shirt front, and says he has seen gentlemen belonging to her Majesty's army, whose back-thrown head, superb erect carriage, taper waist, and well-padded breast, brought them very much to the model of a gigantic cropper, and whose countenance betrayed no dissatisfaction with their own personal appearance; and a style of beauty which contents a man may surely be allowed to please a bird. The above author describes the flight of the Cropper as stable and dignified in its way; the inflated crop is not generally collapsed, but is seen to mount slowly through the air like a large permeant soap-bubble with body and wings attached to it. The bird is fond of clapping his wings loudly at first, starting to take a few lazy rounds in the air; for he is too much of a fine gentleman to condescend to violent exertion. Other Pigeons will indulge in the same action in a less degree, but Croppers are the *claqueurs par excellence*; and hence we believe the Smitters of Willoughby to be only a synonym for the present kind. To be perfect,

a Powter must have his tail well spread out, and not touching the ground, nor drooping close to, or between the legs; if the bird rests upon his rump it is called 'rumping,' and this is a great fault. The shoulders of the wings must be kept close to his body, and rather high up, as if he were shrugging them; he must keep his feet well together, walking chiefly on his toes. He should measure eighteen inches from the point of the beak to the tip of the tail, and his body should slope off taper from the shoulders. As to colour, buffs, blues, and whites are the most common, either pure or intermixed. The yellow-pied Pouter should be marked as follows; the front and higher part of the crop white encircled with a shining green, mixed with the colours with which he is pied; but if the white reach the back of the head he is called 'Ring-headed;' there should be a patch in the shape of a half moon falling upon the side of the neck, of the same colour with which he is pied; if he have not this, he is called 'Swallow-throated,' and this again is a defect. To be perfect the head, neck, back, and tail should be uniform.

The Blue-pied Powter should have two black streaks or bars near the end of both wings; if these be of a brown colour, the bird is termed "Kite-barred," and is not worth so much. When the pinion of the wing is speckled with white in the form of a rose, it is called a "Rose-pinion," and is highly esteemed; when the pinion has a large dash of white on the outer edge of the wing, he is said to be "Bishoped," or "Lawn-sleeved." The bird should not be naked about the thighs, or spindle-shanked; but the legs and thighs should be short, straight, and well covered with white, soft, downy feathers. The nine larger wing feathers ought also to be white; if they be not so, the bird is called "Foul flighted;" if five only are white, he is called "Sword flighted." The Powter is neither a prolific breeder, nor a good nurse, and is therefore likely to degenerate, if not repeatedly crossed with fresh stock. It is a stay-at-home bird, and therefore useful as a good example to the more restless kinds. If the hen Powter's eggs are taken from her, others should be supplied, or she will go on laying, and thus weaken herself. The certain sign of the Powter's being out of health is the hanging of his crop like an empty bag. He is a greedy bird, and will sometimes stuff to repletion. When this is the case, the following is the mode of treatment recommended:—Put the glutton into a stout stocking, with his feet downward, then stroke the crop *upwards*; hang the stocking upon a nail, place some water within reach of the prisoner's bill, and leave him to digest his food at leisure. When he has done this, confine him for a time, and feed him sparingly, or he will overgorge himself again.

Some crosses between the Powters and other birds are held in esteem; that with the Carrier is most so, as being a bird of powerful flight; they are called "Light Horsemen," sometimes "Dragoons"—the latter term is also sometimes applied to the cross between the Powter and the Tumbler. The hen Powter has also the power of

inflating her crop, although not to the same extent as the cock. Some keep the sexes separate during the most severe winter months. The Powter's habitation should be at least two feet high, or he will acquire a habit of stooping.

BARBS AND BALDHEADS.

The Barb is an elegant little bird, very quiet and demure in its general appearance, yet full of fun and activity when occasion serves. At a short distance it might easily be mistaken for a Carrier, having a short back, a small waist, and a naked, wrinkled, red skin around the eyes, which is said to increase until the bird is four years old. The most esteemed Barbs are those which are perfectly black; in these the prismatic colours in the neck show very beautifully, as does also the scarlet circle round the eye. Those of an uniform dun colour are next in order—pied mottled, or 'pied-feathered' birds, as they are called, are the commonest. The good points of a Barb are a broad even cere of naked red skin round the pearl-coloured eyes, long and thin neck, full chest, long body, and pinion feathers, and rather stout feet. This kind is a fertile breeder and a good nurse; its name is said to imply that it came originally from Barbary. There is another variety of pigeon with a Turkish name, Mahomet, or Mawmet, which, some say, is nothing but a white or cream-coloured Barb, with a cross of the Turbit. In an old treatise on Pigeons published in 1795, we have a description of the latter bird—'It is nearly of a cream colour, with bars across the wings as black as ebony. The size much like that of a Turbit, with a fine gullet, and in lieu of a frill, the feathers appear like a heron; the head is short and inclined to be thick; hath an orange eye, and a small naked circle of black flesh round the same, and a beak something resembling a bullfinch's, with a small black wattle to it.'

This pigeon, although an old variety, appears to be a sort of outlaw, having no settled place in its family classification. There is in Germany a bird called Mahomet, of a breed between the Turkish and Scandinavian, and in France again a cross between the Barb and Scandinavian is called after the infidel prophet; whether it is the identical kind which is represented as sitting on his shoulder and whispering wonderful secrets into his ear, we cannot tell. By the way, sceptics assert that the prophet put peas into his ears, and so enticed the bird to his shoulder.

THE LAUGHER

Is said to come from the Holy Land, near Jerusalem. It is very like the blue House-pigeon, with the addition of a small feathery peak on the curve of the head; the general colour is grey or grizzled. This is a very uncommon kind. The name is derived from the curious note of the cock, somewhat resembling inward laughter.

BALD-PATES AND HELMETS.

Here we have bane and antidote; the naked head, and something to cover it. Like the preceding two varieties, these are also what are called 'Toy Pigeons' — mere playthings, not ranking very high in the estimation of breeders. The first is a pleasing bird, with a head much resembling that of the Turbit and Jacobin. It is a robust bird, a strong flier, and prolific breeder. It derives its name from having the head, tail, and flight feathers white, and the rest of the body of some uniform colour, often slate; or else the body white, and the head, tail, and quills coloured.

The Helmet is also valued for having the plumage of the head distinct in colour from the body.

SPOTS, MAGPIES, AND SWALLOWS.

These are varieties of much the same breed as the above; the form, size, and powers of the birds remaining pretty much the same, there being certain varieties of colour only, which follow a definite rule in all the sub-races; the leading principle being that the head exhibits a marked contrast to the body. In none of these are the colours shaded or blended with each other; but in all the line of demarcation is as sharp as the junction of the white and the chestnut in a piebald horse.

The Spot derives its name from a coloured spot in the forehead; except this mark and the head, the plumage is a clear white, according to colour of these exceptional parts. This, which is one of the oldest Toy Pigeons, introduced, it is said, from Holland, is called the Black, Blue, or Red Spot.

The Magpie is a descendant of the once-celebrated Magpie Tumbler, which has now become obsolete, or nearly so.

It is called the Black or Red Magpie, according to the colour of the head, neck, crop, scapular feathers, and tail, the rest of the body being white; on the accuracy and distinctness of the markings, the value of the bird consists.

LACE AND FRIZZLED PIGEONS.

These are both great rarities, valued on that account, and for the peculiarity of their feathers, the fibres of which appear disunited from each other throughout the entire plumage, so that they stand out like frizzled hair. The birds which most nearly approach to them in that respect are the Silky Fowls.

There are several other kinds of foreign Pigeons which may be occasionally seen in collections in this country. They are chiefly valued as specimens of rare and beautiful birds, and, even if we had space to describe them, would be out of place here.

Of those species of Doves or Pigeons which we find both in a

domestic and wild state, we may name the Blue Rock and Collared Turtle Doves; the Dove House, and Indian Rock Pigeons. Of those which are not capable of true domestication, the Passenger, the Bronze-winged, the Long-tailed Senegal and the Harlequin Pigeons.

THE PIGEON-HOUSE.

A flour barrel, or moderately-sized cask of any kind, fixed at the end of a tall stout pole, will do extremely well for the habitation of ten or a dozen pigeons. It should be divided into as many compartments as there are pairs of the birds; each with its separate opening, with a sill to step out on, and a tin hood over the top to keep out the weather. The pole, of course, must be fixed firmly in the ground, and the barrel fastened securely on the top, with cross pieces to support it. Up the pole, at intervals, should be nailed projecting places, on which the feet can rest, when it is desirable to climb to the airy chambers for the purpose of taking eggs, or squabs, as the young birds are called; and a stout rope, or pair of ropes, should go from top to bottom, for the hand to grasp. Such a pigeon-house is secure from the depredation of cats, weasels, &c. A tea, or other good-sized chest, would answer the purpose as well as a barrel; but the latter is named as the readiest thing, which may be obtained of the requisite size, and not expensive.

The best Pigeon House, of course, is one made expressly for the purpose—about square, with a shelving roof. Here the compartments can be made sufficiently wide and high; say a foot and a half, or even two feet each way. The latter is a comfortable chamber for the pair of cooers. The house may be, as it often is, fixed against a wall, well up out of reach. It should, if possible, have a southern aspect; and the front, with its openings to the several chambers, should stand in a foot or so from the sides, top and bottom. But those who intend to breed Pigeons in a large way for fancy, or purposes of profit, must have a more commodious habitation. A spare room at the top of the house, or a loft over a stable, is best for the purpose; and in this must be placed hutches, or coops, for the breeding pairs, which, if not kept separate, will be liable to constant molestation from the others, becoming unsteady, and causing loss of eggs and stock.

Very substantial, and often highly ornamental dove-cotes, may be seen attached to country mansions and old farm houses; some of them divided into compartments, and furnished with all proper means and requisites; but, more commonly, the whole house is but a small roomy apartment, where the inmates form one community, quarrelling and fighting, making love and breeding, in a very indiscriminate manner; and this, no doubt, may answer the purpose of the owner. They increase and multiply, produce plenty of eggs and tender squabs for the table, give no trouble, and cost little to feed; for they pick up their food during a good part of the year in the field and the farm-yard, looking always happy and beautiful, strutting and

cooing upon the roofs, and walking daintily amid the pigs and the poultry, their snowy white or iridescent plumes gleaming in the sunshine; pleasant objects to look upon, and not unprofitable to keep.

But for him who wishes to breed Pigeons systematically, and to the greatest advantage, the Pigeon-loft, which can be entered from within, and opened and closed at the owner's pleasure, is the thing. Residents in towns especially should choose a lofty situation for their birds, and it should have a sheltered and sunny aspect. No great amount of window light is required, except it be for the pleasure of

Fig. 1.



the owner; the birds themselves prefer obscure retreats for their home and breeding place; they can see to feed late after sunset, when it is quite dark, and when other domestic birds have retired. One of the most important features of the Pigeon loft is the 'trap,' and nothing can be better for this than a projecting box, an old tea chest will answer the purpose, with the sides, top, and bottom quite closed in, or made of lattice work, the back opening into the loft, and the front consisting of a latticed door, or rather a drawbridge, conducting the birds to the open space in which they are to exercise their powers of flight. The drawbridge (from which the trap derives its use and name) opens at the top, and turns on hinges below; it is raised or let down by a string, which should pass *through* the loft, so that it can be drawn up, and the trap, closed by the owner outside, or beneath the loft, or in an adjoining chamber, without disturbing the birds, after he has ascertained that they have entered the apartment. At the opening by which the trap enters the loft, it is usual to have pieces of lath hanging vertically, and firmly suspended from a wire above, in such a way as to allow the entrance and pre-

vent the egress of the birds. These the owner can raise at pleasure. From Dixon's 'Dovecote and Aviary' we give a cut of a trap, copied from one in use by Mr. Brown, a large Pigeon-breeder at Norwich. This is a modification of the plan above described, the trap itself being within the building, and only the platform outside.

Fig. 2.

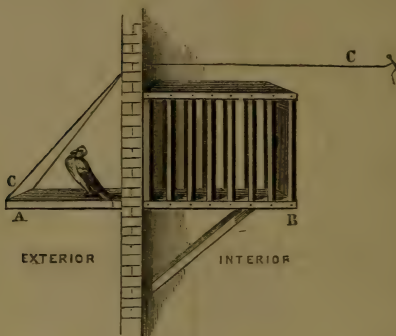


Diagram 1 represents the interior, showing the loose bars called 'the bolt'; B is the little swinging door on the inner end; c is the string which pulls up the outer door.

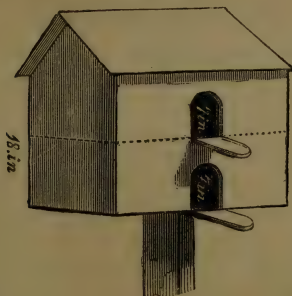
Diagram 2, A represents the door of the trap outside the building; B the inner end of the trap where the swinging doors hang; c the string used to pull up the outer door.

Our next diagrams represent a ground plan and elevation of a small pole house. We will suppose a pair of birds take possession of the suite of apartments whose landing place is marked A: they will probably pass through the vestibule B when they first bring in stores for the nest, and deposit them in one of the chambers c: when the young are a fortnight or three weeks old, the hen will probably leave them entirely in the care of the cock, and make a fresh nest, and lay in the opposite apartment D. As soon as the first pair of young are flown, if they be not taken ere fully fledged, for the table, c will be vacant for the hatching of a third brood; and so, by shifting alternately from one room to the other, and never being idle, a good pair of parent birds will produce quite a little flock by the end of the summer. Meanwhile the same process is proceeding on the other side of the building, which may be seen in the ground plan.

With regard to the interior accommodations required in Pigeon lofts, one of the most important is the nesting places, of which there

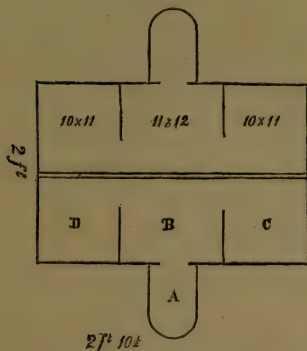
should be two provided for each pair of birds, so that they have no pretext for quarrelling with and disturbing each other.

Fig. 3.



Shelves about twenty inches broad should be placed along the back of the loft, allowing about eighteen inches between each, divide these into spaces of about three feet by upright boards; and

Fig. 4.



each of these compartments again partially divided by a partition not coming quite to the front, thus making the two nesting places required by a pair of birds. Put a ledge along the bottom of each shelf to prevent the eggs being rolled out, and make your house all snug and complete. It is best to place a straw basket or unglazed earthen pan at the bottom of each nesting place; it keeps the straw

together, and can be easily taken out when the place has to be cleaned, or when the eggs, or young bird, have to be examined; as handling sometimes does mischief. The basket or pan (the former is preferable) should slope from the top like a wash-hand basin.

FOOD.

As a general rule, it is best for the Pigeons to take their food out of the house, on the ground with the poultry, and in some measure to forage abroad for their living. Yet sometimes in the summer, and often in the winter, they must be fed in the house. All that is necessary is to throw down a sufficient quantity of peas or barley on the floor, which we suppose to be swept and fresh gravelled or sanded with some degree of regularity, say twice a week in hot weather, once in cold. One reason for feeding them within doors is to give them an affection for the spot; another, that 'the squatters,' as they are called, may learn to peck with the old birds. Old mortar or lime rubbish, are good to strew on the floor with the gravel; next to these, dry clayey or loamy soil, or brick earth, are most desirable. Two other luxuries should never be wanting, salt and water; if a sufficiency of these are not provided, the birds will be likely to stray. The salt should be of coarse grain, and put down in earthen pans. Many Pigeon breeders use what they call the 'salt cat,' which is a compound of salt with cummin and other strong smelling ingredients made up into a mass with urine. But all this nastiness is quite unnecessary; the mineral in its natural state answers equally well. For water, an open vessel is best, to give the birds an opportunity of bathing, in which they delight; but then it soon becomes foul, therefore it is best to have a reservoir with a narrow opening also, and see that both be kept supplied with the element fresh and pure. There is hardly any kind of grain or corn that Pigeons will refuse, but their staple food should be grey peas, with an occasional change, in the shape of wheat, oats or barley, or the small kind of pulse called Pigeon's beans. Seeds are sometimes given as stimulants, especially hemp seed, of which they are very fond; but much of it is injurious to them, being heating, and likely to induce skin diseases and diarrhœa. A little green food occasionally, when they do not go abroad, is good, such as lettuce or salad; care must be taken that it is all fresh. They like boiled potatoes, and soaked bread, ham or bacon fat, cut small; and all these are good, now and then, but not often.

BREEDING AND REARING.

The amateur Pigeon breeder should always start with the cheapest and commonest sorts, and introduce the rarer and more expensive ones into his house gradually; either by buying quite young birds, or eggs to place under the common birds, which are nearly always the best nurses. The aristocratic varieties will be more likely to stay in a house well peopled with others, and they will be relieved

of the trouble of hatching eggs and feeding squabs, which most of them seem to consider a great bore. Squeakers, when they have reached the ripe age of six months, may be put up for breeding. Confine a cock and a hen together in a cage out of sight of the other birds for two days, and the business is done; they may then have their liberty, and will soon begin to make preparations for housekeeping. After making love and sporting about for some time, the hen will grow more sedate; the place will be chosen, the nest made, and presently first one egg and then another will be laid, and the work of incubation commenced. The cock feeds the hen while she is sitting, and takes her place when she goes forth for air and exercise; and then, at the expiration of seventeen days after the second egg is laid, the shells burst, and the chicks come forth. Breeders must generally rest content with seven broods in a year from one pair of birds; for although as many as twelve have been produced, and nine and ten are not uncommon, yet these are exceptions to the general rule. There is perhaps nothing in nature more helpless than a baby pigeon; naked, and scarcely able to move, it can just hold its bill up for the half-digested food which the parent bird disgorges from its crop, and that is all. But after awhile it gathers strength and grows very rapidly, becoming a perfect lump of fat. Soon from squabhood it progresses into squeakerhood, and at the end of six months is ready to become a 'paterfamilias.' This accounts for the rapid increase of pigeons, which, although they never lay but two eggs, and frequently only hatch one, are yet the most prolific of birds.

Most persons, no doubt, think that pigeon's milk is a fabulous article; yet the 'soft meal' with which the crops of the setting birds become filled, a few days before the chicks come forth, may very appropriately be called by this name; it is totally different from the substance found in the crops of the birds at other times, and appears to be secreted for the express purpose of affording just that nourishment which the young requires during the first two or three days of its existence.

If a squab should die, the old pigeons should be provided with another from a neighbour who can spare it, or the food in their crops, provided for the young, will turn sour, and make them sick; but if such a substitute cannot be found, keep the bereaved parents as much on the wing as possible, and supply them when at home with a mixture of bread crumbs and salt, with good thick gravel on the floor.

DISEASES AND TREATMENT.

Perhaps no birds are less liable to disease than Pigeons, if properly fed and cared for.

Canker is the ailment with which they are most frequently affected; it attacks the head, causing swellings full of cheesy matter, which has a foul smell. An excess of food of a fatty nature is said to

cause it, drinking impure water, and sometimes being infected with parasites. The remedy is spare diet, plenty of exercise, after cutting away the excrescences, and applying caustic to the parts. This disease is generally considered contagious. The birds so affected should be separated from the rest as soon as possible.

Gizzard-falling is the result of internal weakness, and is seldom curable. The bird which has this had better be killed at once; change of air may be tried, if it is a valuable one.

Atrophy, or wasting of the flesh, requires a liberal supply of favourite food, and iron in the water. A rusty nail placed in the drinking-pan will do very well. Birds so affected have usually a large appetite for green food. Bechstein says, 'Supply them with water-cresses, and they will be cured.'

Difficult Moulting generally arises from want of strength in the system, which should be nourished as much as possible with good warm diet. The main difficulty generally is in moulting the wing feathers, the stumps of which will remain in the sockets. They should be extracted very tenderly with a small pair of tweezers.

Parasites may be well classed under the head of diseases, as they are the most fruitful cause of sickness. The most common and troublesome of these pests is the *mite*; it is about the size of a grain of poppy, and of a black colour, with white streaks across the body. The habit of this parasite is not to dwell constantly in the plumage of the bird, but to come out of the chinks and crevices where it hides by day, and to swarm over the Pigeons at night, feeding on their blood till they become quite red and swollen. It is the squabs which suffer most from these depredators; they get into their ears, and make them lean and miserable, often causing death. A drop of oil in the ears, under the wings, and wherever else the mites appear, for the young; powdered sulphur scattered in the nests, and dusted over the feathers of the old birds, are the best means of defence.

Clearing the house of lice is a more difficult matter. Limewash and mercurial ointment have no effect. Stop all chinks and cracks; let the woodwork be planed and painted; let the birds have no hay for their nests, but heath and birch twigs; do the walls with a wash of lime and sulphur; clean out *often*—this is a great point.

Ticks are never so numerous as Mites, but perhaps more objectionable. They are sometimes as large as tares, and infest chiefly the head and back of the bird, making it very unsightly. They are difficult to catch, being very quick in their movements. Frequent washings, and powdered sulphur, are the best remedies.

Feather-lice sometimes swarm beneath the wing feathers of Pigeons, without seeming to cause them much inconvenience; indeed, some say they are of service, feeding on the down at the quill end of the feather, and so reducing the warmth of the bird's clothing in summer, when it is likely to be oppressive. They should, however, be got rid of, as much as possible, by the same means as those recommended for Ticks.

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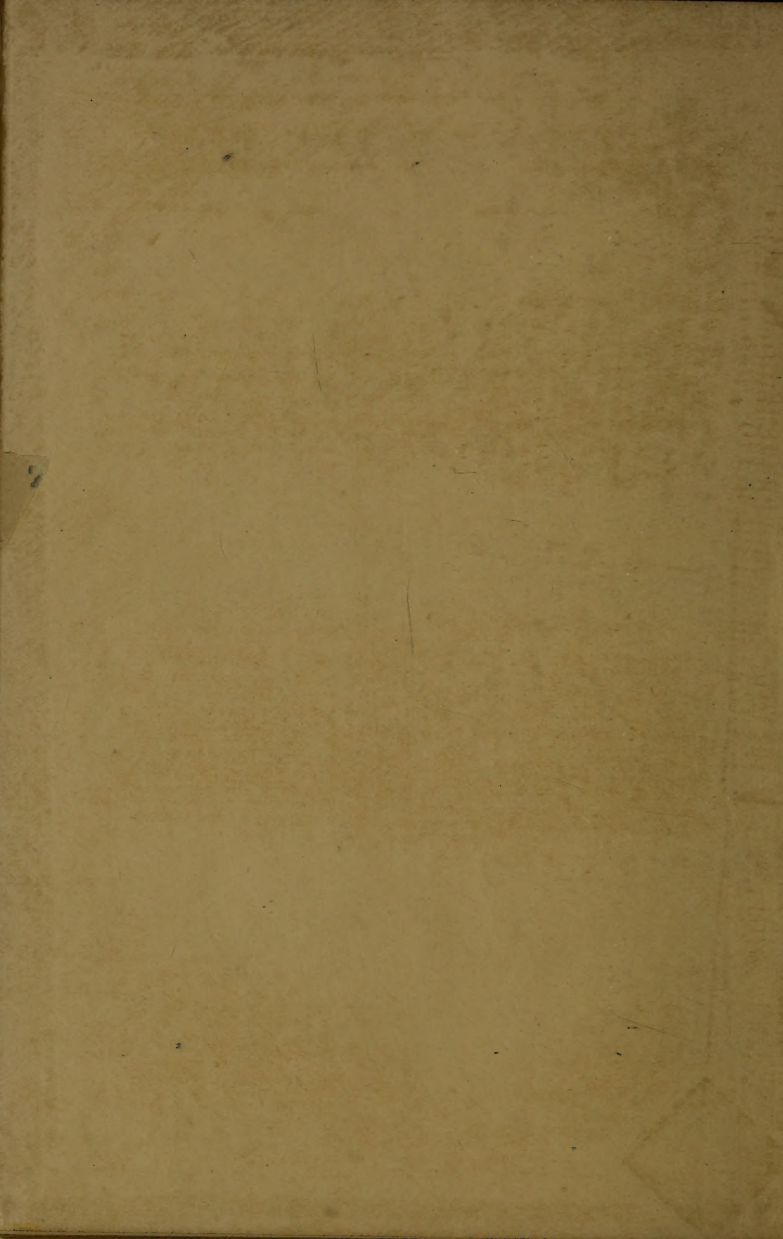
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The golden sunshine, and the pearly dew,
The joyous day, with all its changes new,
Ere it can bloom into the perfect flower,
So with the human rose-bud : from sweet airs
Of heaven will fragrant purity be caught,
And influences benign of tender thought
Inform the soul, like angels, unawares.

MARY HOWITT.

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